

·INDIVIDUAL·  
··WORK·FOR··  
INDIVIDUALS

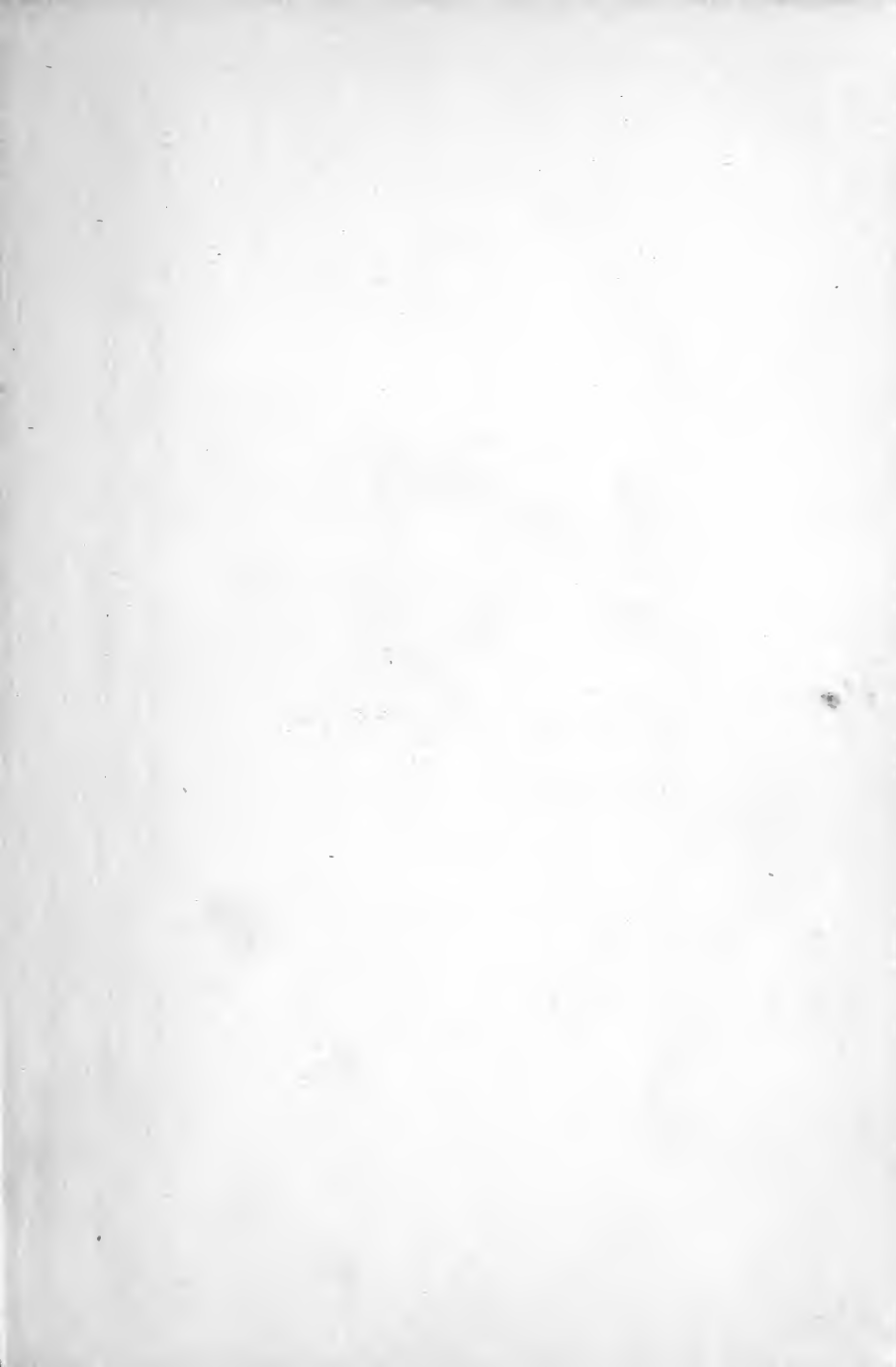


Class BV3790

Book T75

Copyright N<sup>o</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**



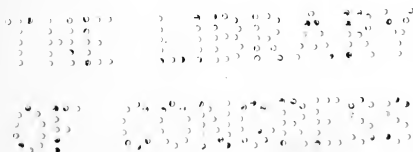


# INDIVIDUAL WORK FOR INDIVIDUALS

A RECORD OF PERSONAL  
EXPERIENCES AND  
CONVICTIONS

BY H. CLAY TRUMBULL

Author of "Prayer: Its Nature and Scope;" "Illustrative  
Answers to Prayer;" "War Memories of  
an Army Chaplain," etc.

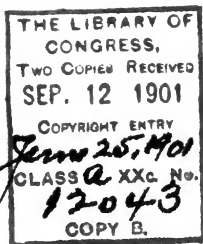


NEW YORK:

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF YOUNG MEN'S  
CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

1901

BV3790  
T75



COPYRIGHT, 1901,  
By H. CLAY TRUMBULL.

THE  
CAXTON  
PRESS  
NEW  
YORK.

THE CAXTON PRESS  
NEW YORK.

2157 307. 18, 74

## Preface

This is not merely a narrative of personal experiences in the line of effort for the spiritual welfare of others. It is rather an illustration of what God is ever ready to do for one who will work for him and for those whom he loves, as God opens the opportunity in his providence. It is a presentation of the best way of doing missionary work in the home and the foreign field, and an appeal for the doing of such work by all.

The truth enforced in these pages is that God's chosen way of winning souls to Christ is by one person leading another person. To be sure, this truth is here illustrated, in many cases, out of the writer's personal experience, but most truths have come home to the heart of a writer in that way; yet this, in no sense, makes any such truth the writer's exclusive possession.

## Preface

When Jesus Christ sought to win the world to himself, he said to his chosen disciples, who had themselves been enlisted one at a time, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples [or pupils] of all the nations." Making disciples of all the nations involved winning to the teacher the individuals in those nations. So, the seeking of a single individual by a single individual has been God's chosen way of evangelizing, or of doing missionary work, from the beginning of the Christian ages even to the present day.

We have a responsibility for the right hearing, and for the right understanding, of God's truth by those to whom we proclaim it. It is not enough for us to cry out a message to those who may hear, or who may not; to those who may understand it, or who may not. We have a hearer to win as well as a hearer to proclaim to. As Dr. Duryea forcibly put it, "The sick soul needs not a lecture on medicine, but a prescription." Has not the ordinary method



## Preface

of the physician of souls been that of a lecturer rather than of a prescriber? Is this the proper, or the sensible way? This volume advocates the method of wise personal prescription for the sick soul. That it may have influence in that direction, over students and followers of the Great Physician, is the desire and prayer of

H. CLAY TRUMBULL.

PHILADELPHIA,  
*June 8, 1901.*



## Contents

I	
WHY IS WORK FOR SINGLE SOULS A DUTY? . . . . .	3
II	
WON TO CHRIST BY A RELUCTANT LETTER .	11
III	
A LIFE-RESOLVE TO DO INDIVIDUAL WORK .	19
IV	
SPEAKING FOR CHRIST TO A TRAVELING COMPANION . . . . .	31
V	
FAITHFULNESS TO A FELLOW-BOARDER . .	53
VI	
WORK FOR SINGLE SOULS IN ARMY LIFE .	73
VII	
WINNING THOSE MET IN CHURCH AND BIBLE CLASS . . . . .	111
VIII	
TALK ABOUT PERSONAL WORK AT NORTH- FIELD . . . . .	125

## Contents

### IX

OTHER TALKS ABOUT PERSONAL WORK . . 137

### X

PERSONAL WORK BY OTHERS . . . . . 151

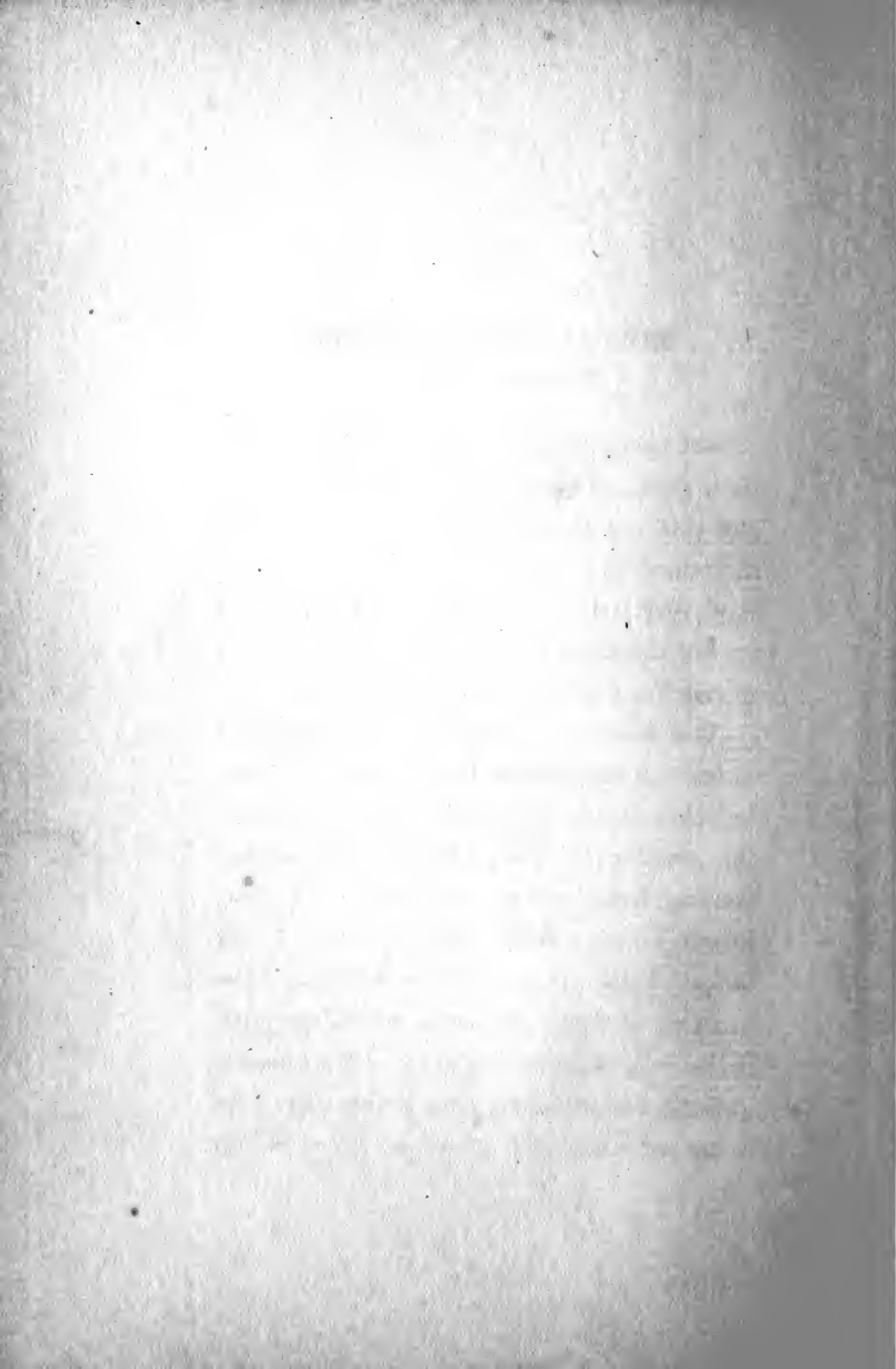
### XI

WHY IS PERSONAL WORK SO NEGLECTED? . 167

### XII

INFLUENCE, ON OTHERS, OF PERSONAL CON-  
VICTION . . . . . 177

INDIVIDUAL WORK FOR  
INDIVIDUALS



## I

### Why is Work for Single Souls a Duty?

Not every man can be a great preacher to a great congregation; but every man can speak a timely word to an individual, if, indeed, his heart be set on so doing. And, ordinarily, it is a better work to reach an individual in this way than to endeavor to reach a multitude in the other way.

As a rule, the intensity of the appeal is in inverse proportion to the area covered; in other words, the greater your audience, the smaller the probability of your appeal coming home to a single heart. I once heard Henry Ward Beecher say, "The longer I live, the more confidence I have in those sermons preached where one man is the minister and one man is the congregation; where there's no question as to who is meant when the preacher says, 'Thou

## Individual Work

art the man.' ” Years after this, I heard the Rev. Dr. Nevius speak similarly as to the missionary field in China. He said he wanted no great preachers in his field. That was not the sort of missionaries who were needed in China. If he could find a man who could talk familiarly, face to face, with another man, wherever he met him, he had missionary work for that kind of man in China. This is the way to do Christian work in China, or in America.

Yet the popular idea of the favorable conditions for successful preaching is to have an attractive church building, into which a large congregation shall be gathered, to be preached to by an eloquent preacher. And if, indeed, the Great Commission were, “Come ye from all the world and hear the gospel,” there might seem to be some reason for accepting the popular idea of the conditions of successful preaching as having a sound basis. The one illustration, out of the gospel days, cited as if in approval of modern methods of preach-



## Why a Duty?

ing, is the appeal of Peter in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, when three thousand souls were newly blessed in Christ. Yet is that illustration rightly used in support of modern methods of preaching?

That ingathering, on the Day of Pentecost, was not merely a result of the "sermon" of Peter. John the Baptist had been foretelling the mission of Christ for several years. John's disciples had repeated and extended his message. Jesus had sent out his twelve apostles to make known his work and the truth, and again he had sent out seventy others also on a similar mission. Christ's own words had increased the power of the words of John, and of the twelve, and of the seventy. He had told all who believed in him to tarry in Jerusalem until the power from on high had come. The time was one of the great festivals of the Jewish Church. All these new signs combined with the lessons which had been taught by the Jewish ritual and the words of priest and prophet for centuries. Hence to as-

## Individual Work

cribe to Peter's sermon the ingathering, at that time, of three thousand persons from among the godly Jews there gathered, would be an absurdity.

But how had Peter and the other apostles been themselves brought in to Christ's service? Were they won by a preacher appealing to a multitude? That is a point to be considered, when we would know whether Christian work is to be done with the one or with the many. John the Baptist spoke to two of his disciples concerning Jesus, and the two turned and followed Jesus. One of those men was John, the other was Andrew. At once Andrew went and called Simon, who was later known as Peter. Thus it seems that Peter, who is credited with winning three thousand souls by a great sermon, was himself won as an individual by an individual. That is God's chosen way among men. Then Philip, a fellow-townsmen of Andrew and Peter, was won as a follower of Jesus. Next after this Philip summoned Na-

## Why a Duty?

thanael; and the circle of leaders was fairly started by the method of one man being the preacher, and one man being the hearer.

Circumstances in connection with my being won to Christ, and with the very beginning of my Christian life, led me to examine carefully the teachings of Scripture, of history, and of reason, as to the truth in this matter; and this it is that has brought me to the conviction that all these several indications of duty combine to show that appeals to the individual by an individual is the hopeful way of winning the race to Christ. In view of this fact, this kind of effort has been the most prominent feature of my Christian work, in whatever field I have labored, in the half-century since I was in this way led into Christ's service.

If a preacher has a large congregation to preach to, he can encourage himself with the thought that some one may be helped, even though he never has evidence of the fact. If, on the other hand, his work as

## Individual Work

an individual is with an individual, he is pretty sure to know whether or not his work is effective. In such a case his whole congregation is sure to hear him, and, ordinarily, he hears from his whole congregation. He can know the result of his work. But many Christian hunters have the feeling of the small-game hunter who said, "In gunning, I ordinarily prefer to use a handful of small shot; for then I'm likely to hit something. With me a single bullet is apt to scatter."

Many a man who is eloquent before a large congregation is dumb before a single individual. Such a man often confesses that he is not an effective worker in an "inquiry meeting." Even in a season of special religious interest he wants to turn the work of conversing with individuals over to somebody else. Yet such a man as Mr. Moody, who thought more of how many individual souls he could reach than of his preaching before any audience, however large, was always desirous of getting

## Why a Duty?

through with his preparatory pulpit appeal and of getting at his more important work of pleading with individual souls in the inquiry meeting. And that is the feeling of every earnest evangelist who thinks more of the work of reaping and harvesting than of the work of incessantly sowing broadcast seed that may, or that may not, have final fruitage.

Of course, the preference of preachers for a considerable congregation of hearers grows naturally out of their defective training in the theological seminaries, and their life habit in the pulpit. They have come to have strong confidence in proportion as they stand in their pulpit barricade and train their sermon columbiads on the gathered hosts before them. But to go out into the open field and engage in a hand-to-hand struggle with a single individual is quite a different matter. They have had scant training in that sort of conflict; therefore they confess their feeling of unfitness for its entering. Bossuet, the great French

## Individual Work

preacher, said frankly as to this very matter: "It requires more faith and courage to say two words face to face with one single sinner, than from the pulpit to rebuke two or three thousand persons, ready to listen to everything, on condition of forgetting all."

But whether attractive or unattractive, easy or difficult, the duty of the individual to press Christ on the individual is imperative on every Christian, and it is the supremely hopeful mode of evangelism. And, whether one is a clergyman or a layman, he cannot be doing his full duty until he has become ready to do this work, and is skilled in its doing.

## II

### **Won to Christ by a Reluctant Letter**

My early life was passed in Stonington, Connecticut. One of my most intimate friends there came out and confessed Christ during a revival, or season of special religious interest. Quite a number of my young friends took the same step that he did. I was interested in what interested them, and the matter was prominent in my thoughts. Had any one of them, or had any one else, spoken a personal word to me on the subject, at that time, I would have welcomed it gladly; but no such word came.

I was, indeed, somewhat surprised that my friend had no word to say on the subject, then or at some time later, intimate as he and I were. Especially was this the case as we corresponded freely during his college course in Yale. When I was about twenty-one years old I removed to

## Individual Work

Hartford, and I continued to correspond freely with my Stonington friend.

In the winter of 1851-52 there was a widespread religious interest in Hartford, in connection with special meetings led by the Rev. Charles G. Finney of Oberlin. But as I was boarding at a house where the young men at the table had only words of contempt or ridicule for the whole matter, I attended none of the meetings, did not at the first hear Mr. Finney, and had no conscious interest in his work or its results. In a letter from my old friend in Stonington he mentioned incidentally that there was again a season of special religious interest in our native place; but all this took no special hold on me, or caused me to feel that my pre-eminent interests were involved.

At that time I was engaged in the chief engineer's office of the Hartford, Providence, and Fishkill Railroad Company. One noon, as I was returning from my mid-day meal, I stopped at the post-office for the



## Won to Christ by a Reluctant Letter

noon mail. A letter came from my Stonington friend. This surprised me, for I had not yet acknowledged his letter of a few days before. As I read the first few lines of the letter, I saw that it was a personal appeal to me. At once crumpling the letter in my hand I thrust it into my pocket, saying to a friend who was with me, "I think there must be a big revival in Stonington, if it has set my old friend preaching to me." Then, brushing the subject away from my mind, I started down Asylum Street toward my office and my work.

But the subject of that letter, and the letter itself, would not stay brushed away. I asked myself how it was that that letter, on that subject, had been written. In all our years of intimacy since my friend had come out openly for Christ, he had never before said or written a word on this subject. Had it been an easy thing for him to do now? Was it a desire for his own enjoyment, or a desire for my good, that had prompted this writing? It was worth

## Individual Work

while to read that letter, and consider its contents, before throwing it aside permanently. These were the thoughts that naturally ran in my mind as I walked toward my office.

The office of the chief engineer, where my work lay, was on the third floor of one of the stone towers of the railroad station. Instead of stopping on that floor, I passed on up the stairs to the fourth floor, and went into a little map-closet on that upper floor. Shutting myself into the map-closet, where I could be entirely alone, I took out from my pocket the crumpled letter, smoothed it out, and began with real interest to read.

"I have been too long silent," wrote my friend. "The prevalence of a deep religious feeling in this community has, to some extent, opened my eyes to my former shortcomings, and led me to consider what was my duty in using my influence, small as it may be, to direct the attention of any of my friends to the consideration of eternal

## Wlon to Christ by a Reluctant Letter

things. Often have I felt like speaking to you on this subject, but as often have timidity and fear kept me back." I noted this statement even as I read.

"We have been companions and intimate friends for years. We have enjoyed the society of each other, and together the society of others. Seldom has a harsh word or an unkind feeling marred the harmony of our intercourse, and it seems to me that thus what you might have considered from another an act of intrusion you will consider from me an evidence of my sincere regard, and my earnest desire for your good."

After this half-apology for speaking on this all-important subject, my friend went on to urge me to seek and find peace in Christ. Then, in conclusion, he said, "Do be persuaded by me. If I could be the instrument however humble, and to however small an extent, of leading you to think seriously of this, I should consider that I had more than repaid your kindness and interest in me. Let me beg you by

## Individual Work

the remembrance of our friendship, but more than all by the regard for your own good, think of these things. . . . If any impression is produced on your mind [by this appeal] do not attempt to drive it away, but seek light and help from the only source whence they can be derived."

Then, as evidencing his thought that little good might come from this personal appeal, and that it might, after all, be deemed an intrusion, he said, in conclusion: "I have now tried to acquit myself of a duty too long neglected, but do not think it has been an easy one. It is one I could not avoid, and, although I have delayed it, I determined to delay it no longer. I shall not ask you to excuse me for writing you so serious a letter, the first one [of the sort] I ever wrote you. You will, I am sure, not accuse me of any desire to hurt your feelings, but will appreciate the love which dictated and the earnest desire for your good which caused its expression. I may never have the courage

## Won to Christ by a Reluctant Letter

to address you again in this manner, and, if I do not, be advised by me now. I ask no answer to this, nor shall I expect any, for I know exactly your feelings. But if, after acknowledging the truth of what I have written, you determine to follow my advice, I beg you to let me know."

Before I had read the last of this letter, I was on my knees in that corner map-room in that lofty tower summit, asking forgiveness of God, and committing myself to a long slighted Saviour. That was a turning-point in my life course; and in a half-century that has passed since then I have been renewedly more and more grateful for the writing of that letter, and for the loving spirit that prompted it. And I have wished that other friends were as true to their friends.

My friend was, indeed, surprised and gladdened by my letter in quick response to his, telling of my action on his appeal, and of my new life purpose. After years of Christian sympathy with that dear friend

## Individual Work

and brother in Christ, to whom I owed so much, I went back to our native place to have a part in the funeral services when they had brought him, from his New York City home, to lay him in the village cemetery in Stonington.

As one and another bore testimony to his work and his worth, I added my tribute by saying that whatever others might testify as to his influence for good in the community, I could say gratefully that to his Christian fidelity, and to his faithful appeal for Christ, I owed, under God, everything that I rejoiced in for this life and for the life that is to come.

And the way of my being won to Christ, as it were, by a word, and that, in a sense a reluctant word, taught me a lesson as to the way of working for souls. That lesson was impressed on me at the time, and it has been renewedly impressed on me by experience and observation, year by year, in all the years since then.

### III

## **A Life = Resolve to Do Individual Work**

In view of the fact that a personal appeal to me, from an individual, to seek the Saviour, had had an influence over my thoughts and action beyond all the sermons and addresses to any collection of persons of which I had been a part, the importance of individual effort with individuals for Christ naturally assumed a new importance in my mind. And the fact that the friend whose first appeal to me had won me to Christ had, even while often prompted to it as a duty, postponed that appeal for years, to his lack and mine, because of his "timidity and fear," had emphasized the truth that the individual Christian has a duty to urge individuals about him to come to Christ, whether he likes to do it or not.

## Individual Work

And thus, in my being won to Christ as I had been, I had not only received a rich blessing to my own soul, but I had, at the same time, been taught, with fresh and irresistible force, a truth of truths as to my personal duty in work for Christ and for those whom Christ loves. I, as an individual, had been won to Christ by an individual follower and representative of Christ. And I had been taught that every individual follower of Christ has a duty to make known to other individuals the duty of serving and representing Christ. And thus my life mission was given me as a duty when my life trust in Christ was shown me as a privilege. Does it seem strange, then, that my half-century of Christian service since that time has been largely influenced by this beginning of my Christian life, under its peculiar circumstances?

It was some time after this that I learned how prominent this method of extending the truth had been among the most devoted lovers of Christ in former centuries;



## A Life-Resolve

but to me it came as a fresh truth, and as almost a self-evident one. I later found that this had been the method of evangelizing, not only among the apostles, but in almost every revival of apostolic zeal. Reinerius, the papal inquisitor, reported against the Vaudois, or Waldenses, in the thirteenth century, that "he who has been a disciple for seven days looks out some one whom he may teach in his turn, *so that there is a continual increase.*" That, surely, is a good way of having the cause of Christ progress where the followers of Christ are, in our neighborhood—or anywhere else.

So soon as I had come to the point of Christian decision for myself, I looked about me for another man. I did not have far to go. An associate with me in the office of the chief engineer was a fellow-boarder with me in the house which was my temporary home. We were accustomed to walk together to and from the boarding-house and the office. We were near each other all day in the office, and we

## Individual Work

sat near each other at the boarding-house table. As we walked together from the house to the office, I told my friend of my new decision for Christ, and I urged him to make a like decision. He turned toward me as we walked, and said earnestly:

“Trumbull, your words cut me to the heart. You little think how they rebuke me. I’ve long been a professed follower of Christ; and you have never suspected this, although we’ve been in close association in house and office for years. I’ve never said a word to you for the Saviour whom I trust. I’ve never urged you to trust him. I’ve never said a word for him. And now a follower of his, and a friend of yours, from a distance, has been the means of leading you to him. And here are you, inviting me to come to that Saviour of whom I have been a silent follower for years. May God forgive me for my lack of faithfulness!”

It will be believed that this new incident pressed on me more forcibly the common

## A Life=Resolve

unwillingness of Christians to speak for Christ to their individual friends or associates, and the duty of such speaking as a hopeful means of honoring their Master and of helping their fellows.

Then it was that I made a purpose and resolve for life. The purpose I formed was, as an imperative duty, not to fail in my Christian life in the particular way that these two friends of mine confessed that they had consciously failed. I determined that as I loved Christ, and as Christ loved souls, I would press Christ on the individual soul, so that none who were in the proper sphere of my individual responsibility or influence should lack the opportunity of meeting the question whether or not they would individually trust and follow Christ. The resolve I made was, that whenever I was in such intimacy with a soul as to be justified in choosing my subject of conversation, the theme of themes should have prominence between us, so that I might learn his need, and, if possible, meet it.

## Individual Work

That decision has largely shaped my Christian life-work in the half-century that has followed its making. I have not always been faithful in this sphere of Christian service, as, indeed, I have failed or lacked in every other sphere; but my resolve at this point has been adhered to as faithfully as any other resolve I ever made, and I have steadily grown in the conviction that it was a wise resolve. The more extensive and varied has been my experience, and the more I have known of the Christian labors of others, the more positive is my conviction that the winning of one soul to Christ, or of ten thousand souls to Christ, is best done by the effort of an individual with an individual, not by the proclamation of an individual to a multitude, larger or smaller, without the accompanying or following face-to-face pleading with the single soul.

My experience came to be varied, but in every fresh phase of that experience the pre-eminent value of work for one soul at a

## **A Life-Resolve**

time, over work for a multitude of souls on the same occasion, stands out as the truth beyond challenge or question. This was my conviction in the first days of my Christian consecration. This is my conviction to-day more positively than ever before. However others may feel about it, I cannot have a doubt on the subject. Winning one soul at a time usually results in the winning of a multitude of souls in the process of time. But addressing a multitude of souls, and urging them all to trust and serve Christ, may not be the means of winning even one soul to Christ, now or at any time.

Within a few weeks of my first entering Christ's service, I most unexpectedly found myself summoned to superintend a newly organized mission Sunday-school in Hartford. In this way I was providentially started in the line of religious work that has been my chief method of Christian effort from that time to the present. In this, my first field of Christian work, I found that I

## Individual Work

could do most and best for my charge by appealing to the individual when he and I were alone together, rather than by my most effective appeals from the desk, or by my most attractive endeavors to impress the school as a whole. Occasionally, when a boy whose conduct and influence seemed hopelessly bad was not to be reached through anything said by teacher or superintendent in the presence of others, I found that a personal talk with him near his haunts of an evening, when no one else could see us, would give me a hold on him, so that I could lead him to a better view, and a higher estimate, of his possibilities and duties. A good superintendent or a good teacher will often do more for Christ and for the most incorrigible pupil by a half-hour's talk with that pupil all by himself out of the school than is done for such a person in a year's time by superintendent and teacher in the school or class as a whole. And this kind of effort I came to value more and more.

## A Life-Resolve

National politics was just then assuming more importance as a great moral issue, in view of the struggle over the extension of slavery into free territory. It was about the time of the formation of the Republican party. I was on the stump for the first candidates of that party; and I was active in the work of canvassing for the election of those candidates. In this field, as in the mission Sunday-school field, I found that the effective political work was to be done, not in the public meetings, addressed by eloquent speakers, but in the quiet, systematic searching out of the individual voter, and winning him to the right side. Indeed, I had the privilege of introducing and advocating measures for an extension of this canvassing for individual voters which were novel then, but which gained in recognition and prominence as their superior effectiveness was evidenced. No political campaign is won by speakers on the stump. Stump speeches are well enough in their way. They arouse enthu-

## Individual Work

siasm and make voters ready to work; but the campaign is won by the man-to-man canvass of the individual voter. One man is more than a hundred in the field of missions or of politics. Until that thought prevails, the world will never be won to Christ, or to any good cause.

During the Civil War I unexpectedly received an invitation to enter army service as a chaplain. My state of health having forbidden my accepting any other position in the army, I accepted this as one where I might hope to be of some service. I was accordingly ordained and went out, and for three years I was privileged to be in active army service. There, again, the Christian work that told was not that of address to a collection of persons, but the man-to-man appeal of the chaplain to the single officer or soldier, when no one else was within sight or hearing. And this advantage was not because the chaplain was a chaplain, and therefore he had to work in a peculiar way, but it was because the



## A Life-Resolve

chaplain was a man and his charge was made up of individual men, and his best way to deal with his men was the best way to deal with all men.

After my return from the army I was again in the Sunday-school missionary field, which I had left to go out as a chaplain. For ten years I addressed gatherings of persons in numbers from ten or fifteen to five or six thousand each. In this work I went from Maine to California, and from Minnesota to Florida. This gave me an opportunity to test the relative value of speeches to gathered assemblies. Later, I have been for more than twenty-five years an editor of a religious periodical that has had a circulation of more than a hundred thousand a week during much of the time. Meanwhile I have published more than thirty different volumes. Yet looking back upon my work, in all these years, I can see more direct results of good through my individual efforts with individuals, than I can know of through all my spoken words

## Individual Work

to thousands upon thousands of persons in religious assemblies, or all my written words on the pages of periodicals or of books. And in this I do not think that my experience has been wholly unlike that of many others who have had large experience in both spheres of influence.

Reaching one person at a time is the best way of reaching all the world in time. Reaching one person at a time is the best way of reaching a single individual. Therefore seeking a single individual is the best way of winning one person or a multitude to Christ. The world is made up of individuals. Christ longs for individuals to be in his service. Therefore he who considers Christ's love, or the world's needs, will think most of individuals, and will do most for individuals.

## IV

### **Speaking for Christ to a Traveling Companion**

I soon found that it was not necessary to be with a needy soul in an "inquiry meeting," or in a room alone with him, where circumstances seemed to favor a religious conversation, before I improved the opportunity to speak a word for Christ to him. If there was an opportunity to speak on any subject, there was an opportunity to speak on the theme of themes, and I therefore came to act on this conviction.

Entering, one November morning, at the Grand Central Station in New York, a crowded train for Boston, I found the only vacant seat was one alongside of a pleasant-faced, florid-complexioned, large-framed young man, and that seat I took, and began to read the morning paper. After a few minutes my seat-mate took from his

## Individual Work

valise a large case bottle of whiskey and a metal drinking-cup. Before drinking himself, he proffered it to me. As I thanked him and declined it, he drank by himself. I still read my paper, but I thought of my seat-mate, and I watched for an opportunity. In a little while he again turned to his valise, and, as before, took out his whiskey bottle. Once more he offered it to me, and again I declined it with thanks. As he put away the bottle, after drinking from it the second time, he said:

“Don’t you ever drink, my friend?”

“No, my friend, I do not.”

“Well, I guess you think I’m a pretty rough fellow.”

“I think you’re a very generous-hearted fellow. But I tell you frankly I don’t think your whiskey-drinking is the best thing about you.”

“Well, I don’t believe it is.”

“Why do you keep it up, then?”

At this he told me something of his story. He was a Massachusetts country

## A Traveling Companion

boy, now a clerk in a large New York jobbing house. He was just going to his old country home to spend Thanksgiving. He confessed that he had fallen into bad ways in the city, very different ways from those of his boyhood in Massachusetts. I asked him about his mother, and he spoke lovingly and tenderly of her. He said he knew she was praying for him constantly. This brought us into close quarters. I told him that I was sure his mother would be happy if he prayed for himself, and that he knew that he ought to do this. I urged him to do it.

He was evidently surprised and touched by my expressions of interest in him. Then he spoke gratefully of another show of interest in him. He said :

“I was coming up Broadway, the other night. It was about midnight. I had been having ‘a time.’ I’ll own up, I’d been off on a regular ‘bum.’ A little ahead of me I saw a fellow in a doorway, and he came out as if he were coming for me. I squared

## Individual Work

away towards him, as I came near him, for I thought he was 'laying' for me. But as I got opposite to him he just gave me a card, and asked me to accept it, and I passed on.

"When I got to the next lamp-post I looked at that card, and it told about a place on Twenty-third Street, called a 'Young Men's Christian Association.' where they'd like to have young men come in any time, and make themselves at home. And there that fellow, that I'd squared away to, was out there at midnight 'laying' for just such 'bummers' as I was, to invite 'em to come in and make themselves at home in that place. I 'swow,' I mean to go up to that place, when I get back, and give 'em five dollars for the good they're doing."

I told my seat-mate that those who love Christ love such as he, because Christ loves them. And I urged him to make his Thanksgiving Day at his old homestead a real day of thanksgiving, by telling his good mother that her prayers for him were answered.

## A Traveling Companion

"That would make my old mother pretty happy, if I did that," he said heartily.

"Wouldn't you like to make your old mother happy, as you go home to have a Thanksgiving with her?" I asked.

"Indeed I would," he said.

As we came to my Hartford home, where I was to leave the train, I took his hand and urged him again to do what he knew was his duty, and which would gladden his good mother's heart. He thanked me for my interest in his welfare. He promised to talk with his mother of our conversation. He assured me that he would endeavor to profit by our talk. I urged him to commit himself to Christ as the all-sufficient Saviour, and we parted.

This was an illustration of the truth that not always does a word for Christ to a seat-mate in the cars, as we travel, result in evidence that that word is blessed in the final act of decision by the needy one. Yet it also illustrates the fact that a faithful word to a temporary seat-mate may be a

## Individual Work

profitable opportunity for giving faithful counsel, even though we know nothing as to the final outcome.

I have had hundreds of such conversations with seat-mates on the car, seat-mates whom I had never seen before, and whom I never met again. I never had such a conversation which I had reason to regret, or which seemed to be distasteful to my companion. And many such a conversation has brought out the warmest side of a fellow-Christian, whom I have come to be intimate with in after years. Improving such an occasion is a manifest duty. The result of such a conversation is with Him for whom we seek to improve it.

---

One morning, as I was riding on a train in Western Connecticut, I saw a young man whom I had seen at a religious meeting the evening before. I had never seen him except at that time; but there was a deep religious interest just then in the church where I had seen him, and accord-



## A Traveling Companion

ingly I took a seat by his side and began conversation on the subject. He seemed glad to be spoken to about it, and I said I hoped he would enter into Christ's service with the others there who were doing so. He said he wished it were so.

"Then why isn't it so?" I asked. "You have nothing to do but to commit yourself at once to the loving Saviour as his servant and follower. He is more ready to accept you than you are to offer yourself."

"Do you mean, Mr. Trumbull, that here on this car-seat, just now, I can give myself to the Saviour, and he will accept me without any further preparation on my part?"

"I mean just that," I said. "The Saviour is ready when you are. There is no gain in your waiting; and no farther preparation is needed than for you to be ready to give yourself to him and to trust him unhesitatingly."

He said not a word more about himself,

## Individual Work

but he gave evidence of a loving, trustful soul, when he reached out in thought after another, saying:

“Mr. Trumbull, I’ve a brother who ought to be a follower of Christ. I wish you could talk to him.”

That is one of the first evidences of the Christian spirit and life,—an interest in another soul, and the forgetting of self in that care for another. Dr. Guthrie emphasized this truth in an illustration in his “Gospel in Ezekiel,” that impressed me profoundly in my early Christian life. A drifting boat was found in mid-ocean, that had come from a sinking vessel. Discovered by a passing ship, a boat and crew were sent in its pursuit. A man wellnigh exhausted was found in the boat from the wreck. As this man was lifted up, and taken out into the other boat, he partially revived, and his first feeble words were, before he sank again into unconsciousness, “There’s another man in the boat.” Saved himself, his first thought was to have an-

## A Traveling Companion

other saved. That's the sign of true life. My seat-mate on the car that morning gave this sign of life, and we parted for the time, as we neared our destination.

The next thing that I heard from him was by letter from a retired country place in Vermont, where he was evidencing his interest in souls in more ways than one. He wrote of it, and I was moved by his letter. It gave fresh evidence that he was in Christ's service. He urged me to do more for souls and for the Saviour, and to urge others to do similarly. In his letter, he wrote :

"O Mr. Trumbull! you cannot urge the followers of Jesus in too strong terms to talk more of him. A kind word may save a soul! That soul may save a thousand! Do they realize it? When I remember, at times, how my soul has longed, when a mere boy, a stranger in a great city, for some one to take an interest in me and my soul's welfare, I feel as though I should fly away for fear there is some one

## Individual Work

near me smothering the same awful feelings, and longing for that kind word of Christian sympathy.

“I remember very well, the morning I packed my things to go and fill that situation in that city, how my mother prayed for me, and said, as she thought of the temptations I should be subject to, ‘O William, how I wish you were a Christian!’ I wished so too. She hoped all would be right. When, that day, I went into the garden to say good-by to father, as he saw me coming he turned his head to hide the tears, and he reached out his calloused hand, calloused for me, and said: ‘You are going away from home, William, and all you have in this world is your good name. Keep that. Attend church every Sabbath regularly somewhere, and you will come out all right.’ I promised him I would. I went away very sad, but determined to keep my promise.

“For one whole year, Sabbath after Sabbath, I attended one church, and sat in the

## A Traveling Companion

same seat, and no one ever intimated that he thought I had a soul; and I was never sufficiently acquainted with a member of the church or congregation to be on speaking terms; yet, at times, my sense of guilt was overwhelming, and oh for a friend! 'Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? . . . Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest.'” Could there be better evidence that he realized a Christian's duty, and that he wanted every Christian to do that duty?

In the country neighborhood where this new worker for Christ had his present home, the church and Sunday-school were closed, and there was no one to lead in an effort for their re-opening. So he opened the Sunday-school, and soon had sixty pupils connected with it. He was superintendent and principal teacher, and was a blessing in that neighborhood. He asked if I could not come up and show him what to do, and how to do it. Accordingly, I

## Individual Work

went to his home and field, in Vermont, and was gladdened by what I saw of his faithful work among needy souls. But I felt that I had learned more from him than he had from me.

How many souls there are waiting and longing to be blessed, as that Vermont boy waited and longed in his first year away from home! One day, on Broadway, I noticed a crowd about a little child. Pushing in among others, I saw that it was a strayed child. He was lost, and he knew no way of finding himself or his dear ones. Seeing my look of tender sympathetic interest in him, the child looked up, and stretched out his hand to me, saying, in pleading tones, "Won't you please to show me my way home?" That cry has been sounding in my ears ever since, when I find myself near a wandering soul like that Vermont boy in the city, and like others who are about us on every side, as we ride and as we walk. There is work enough to do for Christ if only we

## A Traveling Companion

will help the individuals near us who need our help, and who are ready to be helped.

---

It is a singular fact that many a Christian father, who can speak freely on the subject of personal religion to a stranger, or to an ordinary neighbor or acquaintance, seems to shrink from a direct word on this subject with his own child. This is, in a sense, like the feeling of the preacher who can freely make, from the pulpit, appeals for Christ to a large congregation, but who, somehow, feels restrained from urging a single individual, as he is face to face with him, to surrender himself to Christ. I have had evidence of this fact, in many a case, to my surprise; and I have been even asked by godly fathers to speak on this subject to their children, because they felt themselves incompetent to do so. To think of it! A Christian father hesitating to speak with his own child about the Saviour who loves them both, and whom the child needs.

## Individual Work

One Sunday evening, when I was at the house of a New England clergyman, where I was to pass the night, I was speaking to him of his son, whom I had seen, and who had impressed me favorably. The father said that his son was a good boy, but he was entirely ignorant of his attitude toward Christ. He had never passed a word with him on this subject. His son seemed to be no more to his father, so far as this was concerned, than was any member of his congregation who had never called at the pastor's study for religious conversation, or had "risen for prayers" in a church prayer-meeting.

The next morning, as I was to drive several miles to take an early train to my city home, I was glad to find that this son was to accompany me. While it was yet too early for us to see each other's faces, as we sat on the same seat as we drove, it was not too early for us to come very near to each other in an earnest talk about our common duty and privileges in Christ. I



## A Traveling Companion

found my young friend ready and glad to talk on the subject. He evidently wanted to trust himself to Christ, only he was not quite sure of the way to do it. As I pointed the plain path to him, and urged his entering it, he seemed more than glad to trust himself to the Saviour heartily, and at once.

When we reached our destination for the morning, the young man thanked me warmly, and, as we clasped hands heartily in parting, I felt that it had been a profitable morning for both of us; and I thanked God that I had the priceless privilege of helping that youth into the kingdom, as he had evidently long been needing and waiting to be helped.

Some time after this, I addressed, on a Sunday evening, the students in one of our great universities. At the close of the service a student came up to me, calling me by name. It was that young man. He reminded me gratefully of our talk as we drove to the station that winter's morning.

## Individual Work

His resolve of then had never wavered. He was well along in his course to the Christian ministry. In that ministry I hope that he endeavored to reach the one person near him by a timely word for Christ, as a more important and more hopeful work for Christ than a general appeal, however earnest, to a whole congregation. In any event, it was in that very way that he was won.

---

When God brings us alongside of one whom we may help, or may feel a responsibility for, we are not to consider the obstacles, or difficulties, in the way. God will take care of them. Nor are we to be hindered by religious or denominational differences that seem to stand between us and him. The question is not whether he is a Roman Catholic, or a Jew, a Muhammadan, a Mormon, a Maronite, or an infidel. But the one question is, Can we evidence to him, in such a way as to impress on him, and to deepen his sense of their

## A Traveling Companion

preciousness, the surpassing love of God and the blessed fulness of the spirit of Christ? We are not to risk the repelling of him by making prominent the things wherein we differ; but we are to approach him at the one "point of contact," that from a connection at that point the electric current of sympathy may quiver to the extremities of his very being.

In my limited experience with humanity I have had occasion to meet and converse as to personal religion with individuals of every one of the above-named religions, or non-religion, as well as with many others; and I have never found our differences a real barrier to our converse or to the cordial recognition of our real heart sympathy. "Every heart is human," and God's love is suited to the need of every human heart. Our duty is to follow God's lead, nothing doubting.

One winter Sunday morning, in a country place in Eastern Massachusetts, I found myself a guest in the home of the

## Individual Work

superintendent of a Sunday-school, at the anniversary of which I was to speak in the afternoon. In the forenoon of that day I was to address a congregation several miles from my present stopping-place. My host was to send me over, in his home team, for my forenoon appointment. Accordingly I found myself, that very cold day, tucked in, under a heavy robe, in close quarters, in the buggy, with the Irish driver. It was evident that that man was just then the "every creature" in the world for me to teach the gospel to, and I had no right to expect a blessing on my labors for the rest of the day if I failed in my duty to him while on my way to my next appointment.

To begin with, I told my seat-mate whither and why I was going. This was to indicate my confidence in him. Then I said, as showing my interest in him and his standpoint :

"You are a Catholic, I suppose."

"Yes, sir," was his reply, with a tone

## A Traveling Companion

that seemed to indicate a conscious barrier between us.

I at once spoke of several Roman Catholic bishops and priests with whom I was intimate, and whom I valued, and then asked,

“Have you a Catholic Church in the village?”—which we had just left.

“There is no church there yet, sir. But a priest comes over once in four weeks, and says mass.”

“When is the next time for his coming?” I asked.

“He’s there to-day, sir.”

“Then I’m keeping you away from mass. How sorry I am for this!”

“Oh! it’s all right, sir. I’m glad to go with you, sir.”

We were on the same plane by this time. It was now my duty to improve this advantage. And I began:

“You say you’re a Catholic; are you a good Catholic? Do you honestly love God, and trust your blessed Saviour, as you are taught, by your church, is your duty?”

## Individual Work

"I'm afraid I'm not a good Catholic, sir. I'm afraid I do not do my duty."

What better start could you ask for an earnest talk with a nominal Protestant, if he were known to be cold and indifferent, or a backslider, and you wanted to arouse him to deep and intense feeling in the truth of truths? At this starting-point I pressed home the truth:

"My friend, when we think of what the blessed Jesus did for us, how he left his glorious home in heaven, and became a babe in a manger to begin with, and then toiled on here and suffered for years, and was despised and rejected of men, and was crucified and died, in proof of his love for us, and of his Father's love, in order that we can be saved, is it asking or expecting too much of us that we should show our gratitude in the little things that Christ asks of us?"

"No, sir, it is not."

And of this sacred theme we talked together pleasantly, on that carriage seat,

## A Traveling Companion

that Sunday morning, until we reached our destination. My new host, a clergyman, welcomed me to his home, while he directed the driver, with his horse, to the stable. On entering the parsonage, I said to the pastor that, as the day was very cold, I should be glad to have the driver invited into the kitchen out of the cold. Accordingly, he went to the barn to invite the man in. Returning, the pastor told me that the man said he wished to go to the church to hear the gentleman preach that he had just brought over.

As I rose in the pulpit, I saw my seat-mate of the morning facing me in a pew. What he had heard from me about his Saviour, and about his duty to that Saviour, had apparently sharpened his appetite for more. I confess that some of the words of my address that morning were for that one hearer, rather than for the body of the congregation. Then, as at many times before and since, one person was more to me than many persons. As,

## Individual Work

at noon, we drove back together, our conversation was again on the theme of themes, with fresh comments on phases of it about which I had talked, in his hearing, from the pulpit.

On thinking the day's work over at its close, I realized, not that a Protestant and a Roman Catholic had found much that they could talk about together to their mutual spiritual profit, but that we two, who had met together as seat-mates on that cold Sunday morning's ride, might have been profited by the talk, even had we been two Presbyterian elders in conference in revival time. "Go, and do thou likewise.'



## V

### **Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder**

According to Oriental thought and custom, one with whom you "break bread," or with whom you sit at meat, is, by that very fact, in covenant with you, and you have sacred duties toward him that must not be shirked or evaded. Yet many a Christian in a Christian community will sit at the same table with another, as a fellow-boarder, for weeks or months, without knowing anything of his religious or spiritual views or wants. Both will talk freely on ordinary subjects, but the subject of chief importance is not named or considered. Is this right? Will any Christian say that it is? Is it right toward either party? How much is lost, on both sides by such a course?

For a long time I and my family lived at a boarding-house in a New England city.

## Individual Work

There was, during that period, a season of special religious interest, or a general revival, in that city. There sat at the same table with us a gentleman and his wife, who, as we knew, were not confessing Christians, or church-members, and had never expressed to us any particular interest in the revival movement in the city. One noonday I suggested to my wife that we ought to speak to our table neighbors personally on the subject, and urge them to surrender themselves to Christ. As she agreed with me as to our duty, I proposed that while I would go up to the gentleman's place of business and have a loving talk with him, she should seek out the wife in her room, and plead with her for Christ. This was agreed to. Then we knelt together and asked God's blessing on our efforts, and on those in whose spiritual welfare we were interested.

The gentleman was a bank officer. I called there just after bank hours, knowing that he would be disengaged. As I

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

asked him for an interview, he invited me into the directors' room, and closed the door. When I spoke of my loving interest in him, and of my purpose in calling, he burst into tears, and said that he was so glad I had come. Then he told me how he had longed, day after day, for some one to speak to him on this subject. When men came in who were prominent and active in the prayer-meetings, he had tried, in vain, to lead the conversation to the point of a personal word, but had always failed. How adroit some Christians are in avoiding the subject of personal religion in business places and in business hours! I found this man longing to be helped into the kingdom, and glad to learn the way. That was an ever-to-be remembered conversation for Christ.

When I went back to the house, at the close of the afternoon, my wife told me, with a cheerful face, of her experience. After my leaving her, as she was preparing to go to the room of the wife she had on

## Individual Work

her heart, there was a knock at her door. As she opened the door that wife came in, and, bursting into tears, she asked if her friend wouldn't help her to Christ. She had longed to be spoken to by some one, and now she could bear this no longer. The two wives went on their knees together, and they rose with glad and grateful hearts.

That husband and wife soon stood up and confessed their faith together, as they connected themselves with the church. They were active for Christ in all the years until they entered into rest. And their children were prominent and useful in Christ's service after them.

One winter, some time after the Civil War, I passed a number of weeks in a Southern city, with a young friend who was necessitated to be there for his health. All this time we were at a well-filled boarding-house. Most of the persons there were those whom I then met for the first time. A young gentleman who sat just opposite

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

me at the table, and with whom I naturally came to have a speaking acquaintance, was a person whose habits of life and ordinary occupations were obviously different from mine, so that our sympathy would not be promoted by conferring over these. Indeed, I learned, from the proprietor of the house, that when he understood that a New England army chaplain was coming to the house as a boarder he wanted to leave the house on that account, and was only prevented from doing so by the crowded state of that winter resort.

This certainly did not present an attractive opening for personal religious conversation. Yet I had learned that God gives us opportunities and responsibilities, in this line, which are of his choosing rather than of ours; so I waited for signs of God's leading. Meantime I endeavored to show to my table-mate that we had things in common that were to be recognized and enjoyed. To win his confidence to me was a duty, if I would hope to lead him

## Individual Work

toward Christ. Yet the weeks passed on, in the enjoyments and occupations of a crowded Southern hotel life, without any single opportunity of my being with my friend apart from others.

Finally the day of my departure was at hand. After my last dinner at this house, I went to my room, regretting that I had never said a word for Christ to one in whose welfare I was interested, although I had sat at the same table with him, day after day, for weeks. I remembered my life-resolve, and felt that I was not living up to it in this case. It did not satisfy me when I proffered to my heart the excuse that I had never been alone with him, nor had had a fitting occasion for conference. Was it not worth while seeking and securing an occasion, when the interests of an immortal soul were involved?

I spoke of the matter to my room-mate and companion, for whose health I was at the South. I suggested that perhaps it was my duty to go to the room of my fel-

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

low-boarder that very afternoon, and say a word to him for Christ. He might, indeed, take offense at it, but, again, he might not. Was it not worth while taking such a risk for a soul's sake, and for Christ's? The decision was made. We kneeled together in our room, and asked God's blessing on my undertaking. Then I arose and started out. The room of my fellow-boarder and his wife was but just across the hall from ours. Yet it was not an easy task to venture on knocking at that room door, in the fulfilment of my purpose and my duty.

At my knock, the young gentleman whom I sought opened the door, and invited me in. His wife sat on a sofa. They welcomed me cordially, and when I told them that I purposed leaving the place the next morning early, they expressed regret, saying that our intercourse of the past few weeks had been very pleasant. I replied that I had enjoyed knowing them, and that it was because of my growing personal interest in them that I had now called at

## Individual Work

their room. Then I explained that my joy in Christ's service was the greatest possession of my life, and that because I longed for my fellow-boarders to have that joy, I had come to say so. The gentleman said that it was kind of me to say this, and that he had been thinking that he would like to know more about the religious belief I had, so that he might share it. Would I tell him what books he should read, in order to learn about this?

I replied that I could mention good books for him, but that I should much prefer to talk on the subject with him personally in detail.

"It would be very pleasant," he said, "to put myself under your guidance, if you would instruct me."

"But I leave town early to-morrow morning," I said, "and I am cut off by this from helping you."

On his asking where I was going, and learning that I was to visit another part of the South, he responded that he would be



### Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

glad to accompany me. On his asking his wife if that would be agreeable to her, she expressed her willingness to make the move, and it was arranged accordingly. Early the next morning the boarder who had wanted to leave that house when he found that a clergyman was coming there, with whom he could have no sympathy, finally left the house with that clergyman in order that he might be personally instructed in the religion which he had come to desire as his own possession. Surely God was leading. And God ever leads those who are willing to be led, even though they often follow reluctantly!

There was no opportunity for a quiet conversation during the first day, while we were constantly within hearing of others who were about us in the crowded public conveyance on which we journeyed. In the early evening, we found ourselves at a small hotel, where we were to make a rest for a while. My companion was different from any one with whom I had ever con-

## Individual Work

versed personally on the theme of themes. He had not been, while a child, under the religious training and influences with which I was most familiar. Hence there seemed to be no such common basis for a preliminary understanding as I had been accustomed to find. Yet this necessitated a coming down to first principles, which, after all, had its decided advantages in such a conference as this.

"My friend, would you like to be saved?" I asked at the start.

"Indeed I would," he replied.

"Do you think that you can save yourself?"

"I certainly do not," was his response.

"Do you know of any Saviour to be trusted except one?"

"I do not," he said heartily.

"Well, now," I said, "there is no necessity of your reading any books on the subject, to learn the way of salvation. Let me see, here and now, if you are willing to be saved by the one Saviour in his own way.

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

Understand that I do not make any conditions or requirements of conduct or practice, in order for you to be saved ; but I will ask you this question, in order to ascertain your attitude toward this whole subject. Suppose that you were to find that Jesus Christ wanted you to refrain from drinking, from smoking, from card-playing, from theater-going, and from much that accompanies these things, would you give them all up, or would you feel that there were some of these things that you could not refrain from?"

My friend thought the matter over with evident seriousness, and then he gave this intelligent answer :

"Well, Mr. Trumbull, there are some of those things that I might have different views from yourself about; but if I were convinced that Jesus Christ wanted me to refrain from any one of those things, or from them all, I should be willing to conform my conduct to his wish."

"That's all that I want to know," I said.

## Individual Work

"I lay down no requirements. I want him who is to be your Saviour to be your guide. Now just go to your room and kneel down before the Lord, and tell him how it is. Tell him that you need a Saviour, that you do not know any Saviour other than himself, and that you want him to save you. Tell him that you are willing to put yourself into his hands, that you will conform your conduct and course to his wishes, and that you want to trust him."

Pressing each other's hands, we parted for the night. Of course I prayed for him, but I prayed trustfully. When I met him the next morning I asked him if he had done as he promised to. As he said that he had, I inquired if he felt that the Saviour had accepted him.

"I don't suppose that he has yet," was his reply.

"Why not?" I inquired.

"I don't suppose that Jesus Christ would accept me at once," he said.

"Well, then the responsibility is with

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

him. I don't see that you have anything more to do about it," was my reply.

"What do you mean?" he asked, with a surprised look.

"Why, if you have gone to the only Saviour there is, and have offered yourself to him, telling him you are willing to shape your course by his directions, and he is not ready to accept you, but wants to wait awhile, there seems to be nothing else for you to do."

"Do you mean," he asked, "that I ought to believe that Jesus Christ at once accepts me, and that I can fully trust him now as my Saviour?"

"That certainly is the way I understand it," I said. "I can't see any other way. It seems to be that or nothing."

"Then I'll do that," he said earnestly, and he evidently meant what he said.

From that hour he was an earnest, devoted follower of Christ, as I was familiar with him for precious years and in different spheres. He became a close student of the

## Individual Work

Bible. He and his wife together made an open confession of their new faith, and connected themselves with a prominent church in New York City. They became active in mission-school work, and in that field he devoted his trained business mind to perfecting methods and systems of work, so that he was known widely throughout the country as a leader and guide in that field. He became, after a while, prominent as one of the most influential workers, and director of other workers, in the entire country. Then I was, indeed, glad that God would not let me leave that winter-resort boarding-house without going to the room of that fellow-boarder and telling him of my desire for his spiritual welfare.

In his personal habits and conduct he became strict and careful, in the line of our talk that evening at the little hotel, where we stopped on the way from our winter resort. When I, later, told Dr. Bushnell, to whom I had introduced the young gentleman, of that conversation, and

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

of the outcome of it, the good Doctor said, characteristically :

“That shows how much easier it is to do a big thing than a little thing. If you had begun to discuss with this man, at that time, any single habit or practice, you might never have got beyond it. You would have been stranded on the first barrier. But to ask him to trust the whole thing to his Saviour, and be guided by him, was the better way. If one is right at the center, he is likely to get right at the circumference.”

What a Saviour we have, both to trust and to tell others of; and how good it is to work for him !

---

One Sunday I passed with a near relative. There I met a gentleman whom I had never seen before, but who was connected with my relative. I sat with him at the table, and we had pleasant conversation. In the evening this gentleman was out at a church service, and the lady of

## Individual Work

the house was suffering with a headache. I urged her to retire, while I would sit up and close the house after the visitor came in. As I did this, I sat by the sitting-room fire, on the cold winter night. When the visitor was in, and the house was closed, we still sat together there.

He spoke of the service that he had attended, and he was evidently much impressed by the sermon.

"You don't often hear a sermon like that, especially from such a minister," he said. "The minister brought us right up face to face with the Judgment Seat, and there he left us. There were no soft words to ease us down, such as, 'But I trust this is not for you, my brethren.'"

Then, as if soliloquizing, as he sat there looking into the fire, he added :

"I tell you that, in the great day, we who go over to the left hand will not feel very kindly toward the men who have glossed this thing over, when they had a chance to tell us the plain truth."



## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

The impressed man was much older than myself, old enough, perhaps, to be my father; but he had been brought to my side in a condition of mind to need help; and I was there to speak for Jesus. It was not a question of seniority, nor of long acquaintance, to be considered by one who represented the Eternal. Laying my hand lovingly on his knee, as he sat by my side looking thoughtfully into the fire, I said:

"My friend, what do you mean by speaking of 'we who go over to the left hand'? You belong on the right hand, and you ought to recognize this. The judge is your Saviour. You ought to trust him fully as such."

"I suppose I ought to," he responded.

"Well, do you not?"

"I can't say I do."

At this I drew my chair around so that I could look directly into his face, and I said earnestly, feeling the full force of my words:

"This is God's doing, and you must rec-

## Individual Work

ognize it. God has brought us to this house to meet for the first time in our lives. He has planned it so that you should go out to that evening service, and hear that impressive appeal. And now, while all others in the house are asleep, you and I sit here facing the question of questions for your soul. I cannot leave you until you settle it. I speak for the Saviour when I urge you to commit yourself to him for now and forevermore."

Then, reaching out my hand, I said:

"My friend, you realize what all this means, and its importance. Now, promise me that this night, before you sleep, you will, on your knees, tell your loving, longing, waiting Saviour, that you've delayed this thing altogether too long, but that you won't do so any longer. Tell him that you trust him because he is the Saviour, and you are one whom he wants to save. Give me your hand on this, my friend, and then go to your room and do what you know to be your duty."

## Faithfulness to a Fellow-Boarder

My companion evidently felt that it was a crisis hour with him, and he could not evade the sense of this. My hand was outstretched to him. For some time he said not a word, but I saw that he was quivering with intense emotion. Meanwhile I was praying in my heart for a blessing on him in his conflict of soul. Then, with a convulsive movement that shook his strong frame, he put out his right hand and clasped mine as though it were for life. I realized that he had given himself to his Saviour. Rising, I asked God's blessing on him, and bade him good-night, and we parted. I went to my room for the night, and to pray for him, and he went to his room to pray for himself.

Before he came downstairs in the morning I left for my home. I never saw him again. Before the day closed he left that house for his home. By a severe railroad accident, on his way home, he was fatally injured, and soon he was with the Saviour to whom he had trusted himself. **A**

## Individual Work

younger brother of his was an office-bearer in one of the Fifth Avenue churches in New York. When he learned that the loved brother had thus committed himself to the Saviour while he was yet in life and strength, he was indeed rejoiced and grateful. And we thanked God together.

## VI

### **Work for Single Souls in Army Life**

In army life, as in quiet home life, the way to reach the many is to reach the one. The best way to get one's ear is to have his ear alone. Although in my three years of army life I was rarely away from the many, I found, there as elsewhere, that my best work for Christ was not in public address, but in watching for opportunities, or in improving unlooked-for occasions, when I could speak from my heart to another's heart, without being heard by another, even if others were near us. All my army-life experience tended to convince me that this was the best way to work for Christ with souls.

My first experience under fire was on a winter Sunday in Eastern North Carolina. We had bivouacked for the night in an open field, when starting on a raid into

## Individual Work

the enemy's country. As we rose in the early morning to make ready for a march, the blazing camp-fires, on every side, throwing their lurid light on the stacked arms, and the moving soldiers, with the hum of conflicting voices, made a weird and impressive scene; and as I heard for the first time the command, to a company near where I stood, "Load at will," followed by the ring of the rammers in the steel rifle barrels driving home the cartridges, I was thrilled by the sounds as never before. Realizing, as I did, that when those rifles were discharged it would be in deadly conflict, and that before the day should close some of the brave men near me would probably be in the presence of their Maker, I had a sense of responsibility for souls as never before, yet as often afterwards.

Moving about among the fire-lit groups, and looking for a man standing by himself, I came upon a soldier, a bright Connecticut boy, with whom I had often spoken in camp. He was arranging his belt at the

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

moment. I spoke to him cheerily of the activities of the hour, and of the possibilities of the coming day. Then I asked him tenderly if he had committed himself trustfully to his Saviour.

"Ah, Chaplain! This is no time to think of such things. It would unfit me for a fight if I got to thinking about myself just now."

"It is always a time, Sergeant, for thinking about Him who is able to care for us in every hour of life or of death, and who loves us more than we can ever love him. But if you don't want to talk about this now I shall come to you when we are back in camp, if we get there together once more; and then, certainly, I can have a good talk with you about this matter, for I want you to do your duty."

Our raid was a successful one, and soon we were back in camp once more. I looked up my young sergeant friend, and told him that I had come to renew our conversation of the morning after our first night's

## Individual Work

bivouac, on the recent raid. I had a plain, earnest talk with him. He promised to go, in need and trust, to his Saviour, and commit himself to him for life and death. After a while, when we were in St. Augustine, we organized a regimental church, and this young sergeant was the first one to stand up and make a confession of his Saviour, in the presence of his regimental comrades and others. Later he connected himself with his home church in Connecticut, on my certificate of his confession of faith while in army life in the South.

That experience with my first young convert in the army encouraged me in my individual work with individuals there. I saw that it were better to make a mistake in one's first effort at a personal religious conversation, and correct that mistake afterwards, than not to make any effort. There can be no mistake so bad, in working for an individual soul for Christ, as the fatal mistake of not making any honest endeavor. How many persons refrain from



## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

doing anything lest they should possibly do the wrong thing just now! Not doing is the worst of doing. "Inasmuch as ye did it not, depart from me," is a foretold sentence of the Judge of all.

---

When first I joined my regiment in North Carolina, I found there a young lieutenant, whom I had known as an active, earnest Christian worker in his Connecticut home. As I was looking up the members of my new charge, I called on him in his tent, and said something of my hope to have his help in work for my Master.

"No, no, Chaplain," said he, "I've given up all that stuff. I know now that there's no truth in it, and I don't want to hear a word on the subject."

"You are not saying now what you believe, Lieutenant."

"What do you mean, Chaplain?"

"I mean that I know you well enough to understand that what you said and did,

## Individual Work

for years, in your faithful Christian work and in your Sunday-school teaching, has not been given up by you out of your inmost heart. You can talk this way to me now, to try to stiffen up your courage of resistance; but when the camp is quiet, and you are alone on your bunk in the darkness, you would never talk in this way to your God, who you know is near you always."

"Well," he said, somewhat more gently, "I don't want to talk about this subject, at any rate."

"But I must talk about it," I said. "It's very real to me. And I'm here because of my belief. I love you too dearly to refrain from speaking to you, and urging you to come back to your old love and faith and duty and joy."

Weeks passed on. When I saw the Lieutenant in his tent I would show him that I, at least, hadn't lost my faith; yet I refrained from provoking any discussion on the subject. He seemed to be grateful for my in-

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

terest in him, and he never again gave an expression of his unbelief, nor did he say that which would jar on me. I tried to reach him by indirect means, in talking about former interests and persons connected with our work together for our common Master. In this way, at times, the truth we had both then held dear would come into prominence; but no word of unpleasant difference was a result.

After a little there came on a battle in which our regiment lost severely. Several temporary hospitals were opened in small dwelling-houses in different parts of the field of action. As I was occupied in one of these hospitals, I heard that my lieutenant friend lay wounded in another. As soon as I had opportunity, I went over to see him. His right leg had been amputated near the hip. He lay on a cot among many wounded. Looking up as I approached he said cheerily:

“The Lord has got me, Chaplain. I wouldn’t serve him with two legs, so

## Individual Work

he took away one. But now I'll be more of a man with one leg than I was with two."

Then as I spoke warmly of my sympathy with and interest in him, he told of his experience and feelings.

"As my leg went out from under me, and I felt I was gone, I said, 'The Lord's got me, and I'm glad of it.' You were right, Chaplain, that day you came to my tent first, I never really gave up my belief, or had any rest in my life trying to live without faith. And now I believe I shall live nearer the Lord than ever, and have more comfort in him."

He was confident that he should soon be restored to health, and that he should use his new strength in the Lord's service. I had pleasant interviews with him as he talked of his plans in Christ's service, and he gave convincing evidence of his Christian love and faith. But the shock of the amputation was severer than he at first supposed, and he soon sank away to his final

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

rest. The prodigal had returned to his loving Father's home.

---

Army-transport life gave many an opportunity of personal work with souls, as well as did public preaching. Along the Atlantic coast the Civil War demanded frequent and varied use of transports. At one time in North Carolina our division made a raid into the interior of the state, cutting itself off from its base of supplies, and exposing itself to capture by a force of the enemy in its rear. It seemed, both to us and to the enemy, that we were hopelessly hemmed in; but, at the close of the day in which we had accomplished the main object of our raid, we turned directly toward a river, and on reaching its banks found a number of small vessels waiting there to receive us, in accordance with the plan of our commanding general. These transports had been brought up to this point so that we might board them, and quietly slip down the stream during the

## Individual Work

night, thus flanking the force that had come into our rear.

Boarding those vessels and getting under way was an exciting movement. If the enemy discovered our position in season to attack us before we were fairly started, there was little hope of escape for us. The skipper of the craft on which our regiment embarked was a character. He felt the responsibilities of the hour, and he gave evidence of this in his superabundant profanity accompanying every order which he issued. I had never heard such abounding and varied oaths as he poured out in the half-hour from the time we began to come on board till we were fairly afloat and were moving down the stream. Of course, then was no time to begin preaching to him. I could merely watch and study him. But that I did, with real interest.

When, at last, all was quiet, and the evening had come on, and the old skipper was evidently gratified with the success of the movement so far, I accosted him with

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

complimentary words as to the skill and energy he had shown in his command. This opened up a conversation, in the course of which he told of other exciting experiences he had had in other parts of the world. I listened attentively, and he saw that I was appreciative and sympathetic. Presently he spoke of a particularly perilous time he once had on the coast of Africa.

"Ah, Captain! I suppose you had charge of a slaver then," I said.

Seeing that he had "given himself away," he replied, with a quiet chuckle:

"Yes, Chaplain, I've been up to purty nigh ev'rythin', in my time, 'cept piety."

"Well, Captain," I responded, "wouldn't it be worth your while to try your hand at that also before you die, so as to make the whole round?"

"Well, I suppose that would be fair, Chaplain."

The way was now open for a free and kindly talk. As we stood together there,

## Individual Work

on the vessel's deck, going down the stream by night, we talked pleasantly and earnestly, and I got at the early memories of his boyhood life in New England. Then I knew I was near his heart. By and by, all of us made ready for the night. There was but one berth in the cabin. That was the captain's. Our officers were to sleep on the cabin floor. The captain said to me :

"Chaplain, you turn in in my stateroom. There's a good berth there."

"No, no, thank you, Captain," I said. "Let the Colonel take that."

"It isn't the Colonel's room ; it's mine, and I want *you* to take it."

"It would never do," I said, "for the Colonel to sleep on the floor while I slept in a berth. But I thank you just as much for your kindness, Captain."

I lay down with the other officers on the cabin floor. While I was asleep I felt myself being rolled around, and I found that the captain had pulled his mattress out of



## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

his berth, and laid it on the floor, and he was now rolling me on to it. I appreciated the gruff kindness of the old slaver-skipper, and my heart was drawn the closer to this new parishioner of mine. Nor did I lose my hold on him when we were fairly at New Berne, at the close of this trip. I was again with him in the waters of South Carolina, and he came again and again to our regimental chapel-tent on St. Helena Island to attend religious services there. I saw that I had a hold on him.

One week-day he called at my tent, having a brother skipper with him, whom he introduced to me, and then fell back, leaving us together. He joined my tent-mate, the adjutant, and stood watching while I talked with the new comer. He told the adjutant, with a string of oaths, that his foolish friend didn't believe there was a God, so he'd "brought him over here for the chaplain to tackle." It was fresh evidence that life was stirring in him, and that therefore he wanted another saved.

## Individual Work

When the war was over, I heard of that slaver-skipper in his New England seaport home. At more than threescore years of age he had come as a little child to be a disciple of Jesus; he had connected himself with the church, and was living a consistent Christian life. He was honestly trying his hand at "piety" before he died, and so was completing the round of life's occupation. For this I was glad.

---

In some instances I was not sure of the result, or gain, of a special conversation in the army on the subject of personal religion, until long afterwards, but the doing of duty never depends on our knowledge of the gain or results. A letter came to me from the good parents of a Connecticut boy in our regiment. They wanted me to reach him, for Christ, if I could, while they were praying for him and for me in their home. I took this as laying a special mission on me, and I sought him out at once.

I found him in our regimental hospital,

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

under medical treatment just then. Although there were other patients in the ward, I could sit down by his cot and be practically alone with him. As I sat there on a Sunday afternoon I talked of his Connecticut home, with which I was acquainted. I spoke of the Sabbath and its influences, as it was in the country in Connecticut, in contrast with what it was in our Southern camp life. As I talked I took his hand in mine and stroked it in tenderness.

I said nothing of his parents' letter to me, but I spoke of their loving interest in him, and of the certainty that such parents were praying constantly for their loved son in the army. I urged him to commit himself to their Saviour as his Saviour. As I talked this way I saw the tears dropping on both our hands, and I knew his heart was touched. After he was out from the hospital, I saw him while about his duties in the regiment, and I had pleasant talks with him on the subject of which I had spoken

## Individual Work

in the hospital, but I could not get him to commit himself to a positive avowal of his surrender and his trust.

But the time came when the young soldier was at his home again, when the war was over. Then he wrote, thanking me for my interest in him, and telling me that because of it he was going to stand up on a Communion Sunday, in the old home church, where his father was a deacon, and confess his faith in that father's Saviour. Then he went back to that Sunday in the hospital when I stroked his hand and his tears fell on our hands.

"After you'd gone out that day, Chaplain," he said, "I cursed you because of what you'd been doing and saying. I was afraid that some of the other fellows had seen me weeping; and I said you were mean to take advantage of a fellow when he was sick, but now I'm so glad you did it."

Again he wrote other letters in the same grateful strain. Then he wrote me that he

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

had named his first little boy after his chaplain, and that he wanted me to have an interest in that boy.

---

One evening, as I was returning to my evening quarters, I saw the gleam of a faint light through a low shelter-tent in our regimental camp. It was long after "Lights Out" had been sounded, and I stooped and scratched at the tent entrance as a signal that I wanted to enter. A call, "Come in," responded, and I crept in. A soldier, seated on the ground, was writing home by a small tallow candle, and I knew that any soldier was in an accessible mood when thinking of his home. So I talked with him about home. A sister, a devoted Christian, was, he said, very dear to him. She had urged him to yield himself to Christ, and he was writing to her that very evening.

I felt that the occasion was a peculiar one, and I must improve it. I urged him to a decision at that very time, and I would not consent that he should postpone it. I

## Individual Work

saw that all he needed was to come to the act of decision, and there might never be a better moment for this with him than now. So there I remained with him, pleading for Christ until far into the night. I knew that there would probably never be "a more convenient season" than this. And his strong New England mind evidently took in this fact. He was considering the matter well. Finally, he voluntarily knelt with me beneath that shelter-tent, and deliberately consecrated himself to the Saviour's care and service. At this I rejoiced with him, and thanked my God and his. Then, giving my hand to him, I went on to my quarters with a happier heart.

It was but a little while after this, that, in an engagement in which we had a part, he was killed; and as I said earnest words of prayer over the grave in which we buried him, and as I looked down into his dead face, I was glad that I waited that memorable night until he knelt by my side and gave himself up to his loving and

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

waiting Saviour. And when I wrote to that faithful and praying sister, and told her of that midnight hour of his deliberate consecration, her sister heart was comforted and gladdened, and she wrote me grateful words for my interest in her loved brother, feeling that her many prayers for him had been answered.

---

I was in the habit of inviting soldiers to come to my tent, or other quarters, to talk with me of personal religion. Sometimes they seemed to gain little help by such conversation. At other times a few words were evidently sufficient for their needs. One young soldier, from an adjoining regiment, came in anxiety as to his spiritual condition. I tried to make his duty and his privilege plain, but I did not seem to succeed. I prayed with and for him, but he did not find peace. He said that he must now return to his regiment, but he would come and see me again.

As he went out, I handed him a copy of

## Individual Work

a little Soldier's Hymn-Book, which was the only reading-matter I had for distribution. When I met him again, his face was bright with the cheeriness of glad hope. As I asked him about himself, he replied:

"You tried to make it plain to me, Chaplain, but I didn't get any help. But, as I came away from your quarters, I opened that little hymn-book, and I read:

'Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come!'

And then it was all clear to me."

After the war, I was in Tremont Temple, when Moody was back there for the first time after having left Boston for Chicago. That soldier convert waved his hand to me across the hall. I found, afterwards, that he was now in active Christian work in that vicinity, and that on that account he was attending that convention. When I knew this, I thanked God that



## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

Charlotte Elliott's hymn had helped him more than I could to see the way of peace.

---

There were strange characters, as well as strange experiences, encountered in my army Christian work. The army brought all sorts of persons together, and I had to become acquainted with and interested in them all. While at St. Augustine, Florida, in the winter of 1863-64, a part of our regiment did garrison duty at the old Spanish coquina fort, with its bloody memories and its weird legends of former occupants. I was accustomed to hold Sunday-school services each Sunday afternoon, and also mid-week evening services, in the little chapel opposite the main entrance of the fort. Just outside of that chapel there was a pile of rusty cannon, on which men would sometimes loll while we were having services inside. And as I moved about the fort I had many a talk with men whom I rarely met so familiarly elsewhere.

## Individual Work

One day, in walking through the fort, my attention was drawn to a strange face glaring through an iron-barred opening of a dungeon door in the southwestern corner of the casemated walls. It was the most repulsive face I had ever seen. Low-browed, coarse-featured, dark-complexioned, with small black eyes under shaggy eyebrows, and thick sensuous lips, it seemed like a cross between a Digger Indian and a New Zealand native, with the worst peculiarities of both. The expression was one of low cunning, with a mixture of hate and derision. It was an un-human face, yet the man who bore it was evidently one of my parishioners, or he would not be where he was.

"Who are you, my friend?" I said.  
"Where do you belong?"

He answered in a low, gruff voice, as if he were resenting an attack.

"I belong to the Tenth Connecticut."

"You belong to the Tenth Connecticut!" I said.

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

"Why, then I'm your chaplain, and I've got an interest in you."

As I kindly questioned the man, I found that he had been most of the time since his enlistment in confinement for insubordination, and therefore I had not met him. After a brief talk I left him. Soon he was released from confinement, and was again with his comrades. I saw him occasionally, and spoke to him kindly, but I did not look upon him as a hopeful case in comparison with others, and had comparatively little to say to him. It seems, however, that I had gained more of a hold on him than I was disposed to recognize.

After a while, we left Florida for Virginia. As we moved up along the coast in a crowded transport, this man came to me in the throng, and said softly:

"Misser Chaplin, I want to talk to you."

"Well, I'm always glad to talk to you," I said. "But where can we go to talk? Let us lean over the steamer's rail. That is our only place to talk by ourselves."

## Individual Work

As we leaned there together, he told me his strange, pathetic story.

"Misser Chaplin, you 'member when you talked to me at the dungeon door. You spoke kind to me. You said you's my chaplin. I never forget that, Misser Chaplin. I'm a rough feller; I never knowed much. I suppose I'm human, that's about all. I never had no bringin' up. Fust I knowed o' myself I was in the streets o' New Orleans. Never knowed a father or mother. I was kicked about. I came North and 'listed in army. I've had a hard time of it. My cap'n hates the very groun' I tread on."

Then with a chuckle and a leer, as he thought of his Ishmaelitish life, he said: "*I did* worry my cap'n. And he hated me. Ten months with ball and chain! A hard time of it! But what you said at the dungeon door's all true. And what you said in prayer-meetin' is all true."

"Prayer-meeting!" I said. "I never saw you in prayer-meeting."

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

"No, I was jus' outside, on those old cannon. And now, Misser Chaplin, I want to do right. Misser Chaplin, I suppose we's goin' into a fight, and I want to do my duty. They say I'm a coward. I've never been in a fight, but I want to do my duty." As a friend of mine, to whom I told this story, said, "The only religious instruction this man ever got was through eaves-dropping at a prayer-meeting."

Then in a voice strangely tender in contrast with the first gruff utterance which I heard from him in the dungeon, he said: "Misser Chaplin, you're the only man who ever spoke kind to me. If I get killed I want you to have my money. And if I get killed, won't you have it writ in the paper that Lino died for his country?"

That was another noteworthy incident in my personal Christian work for others. We reached Virginia. We were in a fight. Lino bore himself so bravely that his captain, whom he had worried so long, called him out before the entire company, at the

## Individual Work

close of the engagement, and commended him for his bravery and good service. Hearing of this, I looked him up after the fight was over, and congratulated him on his well-doing in active battle.

"You've done bravely, I hear, Lino, and I'm glad of it."

"Yes," he said, with a softer chuckle than before. "They called me a coward, but I tried to do my duty. 'Tain't always the frisky ox that's at the far end of the yoke."

That long friendless man showed, in his way, his intention of doing what God would have him do. Who of us has better improved his opportunities?

---

God's estimates are not as man's estimates, and we have reason to rejoice that this is so. He loves us not for what we are, but for what he is. How often it is that we fail to exert ourselves in behalf of a soul for Christ because that soul seems to

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

us not a hopeful subject, either on account of his morals or of his intellect.

Among the recruits picked up in Connecticut, for the sake of the bounty, in the later years of the Civil War, were some men who would not have been accepted in the army on their merit. One such man in our regiment was below the physical standard, and he seemed beneath a fair average of intelligence. He was a laughing-stock in the regiment. He was not competent for a soldier's duty. He was unable to drill. So he was put at a menial duty, and became a byword and a butt. I do not think that it occurred to me, at that time, that he was a proper subject for religious conversation. I am speaking of what was, not of what ought to have been. Possibly the confession of my lack will suggest to some one else the impropriety of such a failure.

One day, in St. Augustine, as I was walking on the parapet of the old Spanish fort, I came upon this man. No one else

## Individual Work

was just then in sight, and it seemed as if it would be taking nothing from others if I said a word to him. So I stopped to talk with him. Calling him by his regimental nickname, I asked:

“Do you ever pray?”

“I say ‘Oure Farther,’” was his thick and drawling response.

“Who is your Father?” I asked.

That question he couldn't answer. He had only, by some one, been taught by rote to say the words of that prayer. Then I took him as a little child,—as, indeed, he was a little child in intellect; and I told him of God as his loving Father in heaven, who would be glad to have him pray to him. And I told of Jesus and his love. He listened like a glad child who was taking in a child's lesson, and he seemed to comprehend what I was saying, as well as any of us can comprehend these truths. From that time I had a new interest in that soldier boy, and he seemed to be showing signs of awakened life. He



## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

welcomed my interest in him, and he responded gratefully to every word of counsel or suggestion from me. I reproached myself that I had not been readier to estimate him as God estimates every soul whom the Saviour loves and died for.

After the war was over I was, one Sunday evening, to make an address in a Connecticut city. As I entered the outer door of the prominent church, a bright-faced young man stepped forward to greet me, calling me by name. As I looked the second time, I saw that it was that anything but hopeful soldier whom I first talked with on the parapet of the old Spanish fort in St. Augustine. On inquiry, I found that he had made a public confession of his faith in one of the prominent churches in that city, and that he was witnessing a good confession. He was a regular attendant in the Sunday-school. As I looked at him, I hoped that I had been of some service to him ; for I was sure he had taught me a good lesson,—a lesson that I want to

## Individual Work

pass on to others. Any soul that Jesus loves is worth our best work in its behalf.

---

One day, in Virginia, in the later months of the war, as I passed the regimental guard-quarters, I saw a man tied up by his thumbs at the "wooden horse" outside those quarters. It was no time to talk with a man in that position; but I quietly noted the face, with the intention of speaking to the man afterwards. Those were the days of substitutes and "bounty-jumpers" in lieu of native-born volunteers, and severe punishments were more in vogue than before. This man was a substitute from over the ocean. He had been enlisted under a false name by a relative in this country, and, with his immediate associates as they were, he had little inducement to do well.

Not long after, when I had given notice at the chapel tent that on Tuesday evening I should be glad to see any soldier at my tent who wished to talk as to personal

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

religion, this substitute soldier came to my tent on the evening named. I welcomed him heartily, and referred to my special invitation for that evening. He replied, with some embarrassment, that he had not come at that call, but merely to talk with me on another matter. I asked if his special business could wait a little, while I spoke of the matter to which I had devoted the evening. He said that the other thing could wait. Then I told him of my personal interest in him, and urged the surrender of his life to his Saviour. His response profoundly impressed me as disclosing the workings of his inner life.

"I'm a very strange man, Chaplain! Now that I'm talking with you, I realize the truth of all you say, and I'm not a hypocrite in agreeing with it all. But I'll go out from your tent, and it will not be an hour before I've forgotten all about this talk, and am just as wicked and as wild as ever. And I'll not think of religion again until, perhaps, I'm on guard some night.

## Individual Work

Then when I'm all by myself, and the camp is quiet, as I'm passing back and forth on my beat, it will all come back to me again, and I'll see just what a sinner I am, and how like a fool I've acted ; and I'll resolve that, if only I live till morning, I'll be a very different man. And I'll think that way until the 'relief' comes round, and I go to the guard-quarters again. And then—will you believe it, Chaplain?—it will not be five minutes before I'm swearing and scoffing as if I'd never had a serious thought in my life. O Chaplain ! I'm a very strange man, sir ; a very strange man !”

As this my soldier parishioner, whose strangeness consisted mainly in his exceptional understanding of the workings of his own heart, talked thus with me of his moral struggles and need, I was drawn to him by an interest that never intermitted while he lived. He came to be a brave soldier. When the war was over, he became an active worker in a prominent New England church. He took an exception-

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

ally high stand in business circles, in political life, in military organizations. He was instrumental in leading many who had gone astray back to ways of uprightness; and when his earthly life course had ended his memory was precious in the minds of many who were inspired and aided by his example and efforts, as a specimen worker for Christ won to this work by a timely word of invitation and guidance.

---

Army life continued far into the days of peace. The intimacies and affections of active service did not end when soldiers left the battle-field for their old home, or for a new one. The revival of personal relations when the chaplain met members of his regimental charge under peculiar circumstances often enabled him to say a word for Christ to an old soldier, which had back of it the force of sacred war memories.

A regimental "pioneer corps" did peculiar army service, and its members often exhibited high qualities of courage and

## Individual Work

daring. They would go before our column to cut a way through forest or bushes, or to construct a bridge or road, sometimes under the enemy's sharp fire. To fill their place and do their work was to win honor and regard from officers and men. They would quickly construct a shelter for an officer, which gave him protection and comfort, as he stopped for a night or a week. In doing this they showed rare skill and taste, and made themselves indispensable to the command as a whole.

Some months after the war I was announced to speak, one Sunday evening, in a prominent church in Western Massachusetts. As I rose in the pulpit I saw in the congregation a well-remembered sergeant in our "pioneer corps." He was one of the bravest of the brave, always prompt and ready in whatever he had to do. Hearing that I was to speak, he had come to listen to his old chaplain. The pastor in whose pulpit I stood told me afterwards that this veteran soldier had a good name

## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

in the community, although he was not a church-member. At once I felt that I must reach him for Christ. The chaplain must be faithful that night to the pioneer corps sergeant.

At the close of the service the brave old "pioneer" came forward to give me greeting. After a talk about our campaigning together, I asked him if he wouldn't go with me for a talk to the parsonage, where I was to pass the night. This he was glad to do. By the pastor's consent I had a room where we could be by ourselves. In a free talk with my old comrade, I found him ready and glad to commit himself wholly to Christ. He only needed to know what to do, and to be helped to do it. When I asked him if he was ready and willing to take this step now, he assured me that he was. At this we went on our knees together, and the brave soldier of country became a trustful soldier of Christ. As I knew of him afterwards, I felt that he was one of many who

## Individual Work

needed only the being enlisted to be ready for active, persistent service.

---

It was with officers as with men. The intimacies and associations of camp and campaigning brought persons together in never-to-be-forgotten relations. Years after the war, men who had been in close companionship as fellow-officers in active service would be closer together in an hour or two of renewed intimacy than fellow-civilians could be in years of association. Every old soldier knows how this was.

On one occasion, I met, in civil life, a fellow-officer, whom I honored and looked up to. In a strange place, we were in crowded quarters, where there was not a separate bed for each. In consequence, we two, who had slept on the field under the same blanket, shared the same hotel bed. Our army experiences made each of us more willing to consent to this arrangement than if we had not been in the army. My



## Work for Single Souls in Army Life

kneeling in prayer, before I lay down, opened the way for a close and loving talk on the precious relations which are between those who are one in Christ,—a union closer than that of fellow-soldiers.

My officer friend, although reverent toward Christ and his salvation, was not ready to express his personal trust in the Saviour. As I tenderly urged him to commit himself to the one Saviour, he confessed that he was not ready to do so, because of a reason that he deemed sufficient. As we conversed that night on the subject, he told me that if a certain state of things should ever exist, he would be ready to take the step, as he was not now. That night's conversation and my officer friend's conditional promise were stored in my mind, and he was a subject of my prayers.

As the months passed on, the state of things which he suggested as likely to change his view as to his personal duty came about. When I knew of this change in affairs, I had his promise in mind, and

## Individual Work

in the early morning I presented myself at his home.

"I told my wife that the chaplain would be up here to see me, after this," was the greeting that he gave me, as I entered his home. What if I had failed to remember my promise at a time like this?

That brave officer was ready to do his duty. He openly took a stand for Christ. His influence over others was great. He became known throughout the land as a Christian. If I had never been the means of winning any other to a confession of the Saviour, I should feel that all my labors with individuals were more than repaid by the result of that one evening's talk with this soldier of country and of Christ.

## VII

### Winning those Met in Church and Bible Class

Where you have many persons to hear you, as where you have only one, it is the single hearer, or the one individual with whom you converse, that is the hopeful subject of Christian effort. It is the eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart intercourse that tells for Christ with a soul. It has often seemed to me that there is about so much good going out from a speaker, at any one time, in behalf of souls. This good is divided among the hearers present. If there are twenty hearers, each can have his one-twentieth. If there are a thousand, each has only a thousandth. When there is but one, he takes the whole. This thought is an encouragement to a preacher when he has but a small audience.

In a Bible class that I had the privilege

## In Church and Bible Class

of conducting for years, I counted more on my talks with individuals after the class hour was over than on all my words to the class as a whole, during the school session, stimulating and pleasant to me as was this latter exercise. One summer Sunday morning, as I passed out from the Bible class room toward my home, I overtook a young lady who had been an attendant in the class, for some weeks, with a lady who was a regular member. This visitor to the Bible class was not a member of our church congregation, nor did she belong to a family that was; but I was alone with her as we walked away from the room that Sunday morning, and therefore I must say a word for Christ to her, whether it seemed a fitting time or not. "In season and out of season" is the rule for us.

As we walked, we talked of the Bible lesson of the morning. Every Bible truth is like a many-sided crystal,—turn it which way you will, there is one facet that sends the light directly to your eye. So, that

## Individual Work

morning, we found that a talk about the Bible lesson of the day brought us to a talk about our personal relations to the Saviour. In this talk she seemed much interested, and as we came opposite my house, where I would ordinarily have stopped, I felt that I had no right to leave her, and I kept on with her to her home. As she told me afterwards, she had longed for this talk, and when we approached my house she feared I would leave her, although she was not ready to end the conference. How often is this the case!

That Sunday morning walk was a crisis hour in her life history. She gladly yielded herself to the Saviour, and devoted herself to his service. She connected herself with the church of which I was a member, and she became a Sunday-school teacher of rare devotion and efficiency. She not only herself loved Christ, but she faithfully represented Christ to others. One after another of the boys in her class was won to Christ's love and service: and

## In Church and Bible Class

those who were under her instruction and influence now rise up to call her blessed. What would my work as a leader of the class as a whole have amounted to, that Sunday morning, without my having that personal religious talk with that one visiting young lady?

---

There came into that Bible class, as a member, a gentleman with whom I had been very pleasantly associated in another part of the country in former days. His wife came with him to the class. Yet I knew nothing of their personal religious views, save that, while they were members of our congregation, they were not members of our church. I felt that it was not enough to counsel or urge them and others of the class collectively to submit themselves to Christ. Speaking to an individual as an individual is the way to win a soul, not addressing a congregation of persons in the hope that some individual will think that he, rather than everybody

## Individual Work

else, is addressed by the speaker ; so I determined to reach these two individuals outside of the Bible class room.

They lived quite a distance from my home, in another part of the city. Thither I went on a week-day afternoon. I told them why I had come, and how deeply I was interested in their welfare. I urged their committing themselves to the Saviour. We kneeled and unitedly sought God's blessing on us, as God saw our need. That was a decisive hour with them both. They were glad to have it so, and I was glad that it was so.

Both became teachers instead of passive learners. They were soon active in church and Sunday-school work. The gentleman became a leader in the Sunday-school, and a prominent and honored office-bearer in the church. If that Bible class had accomplished nothing more than winning that gentleman and his family to their present sphere of Christian activity, it would more than have repaid me for all that I have

## Individual Work

done in connection with it. I did that good work by God's blessing, through only going one week-day afternoon to have a face-to-face talk with those two for Christ. And all my best work for souls seems to have been done in just that way.

---

A graduate of a school of science, who was a pronounced agnostic in his attitude toward religious truth, having heard of this Bible class and its discussions, asked a friend if he might, though a disbeliever in the Bible, be an attendant of the class. Being assured of a cordial welcome he came, and was interested in the discussions, and, as a result, became a firm believer in the Bible, which was the basis of all these discussions. Of course I had, meantime, repeated eye-to-eye talks with him on the subject, outside of the class; for it is indeed rare for any abiding impression to be made by words spoken and heard in public unless the truth is applied, and an acknowledgment



## In Church and Bible Class

of it secured in a face-to-face talk with the individual hearer.

This man said afterwards that he was first touched by my saying to him one day, "I am praying for you every day." Before a great while he who came in as a non-believer stood up in his home church and confessed his faith in his newly found Saviour. Then he too became a Bible teacher, faithfully leading others to the Saviour, whom he was thenceforward glad to trust and represent.

---

One Sunday afternoon a well-known graduate of one of the prominent American universities outside of Philadelphia, who had given up his early religious views, but who had come to question in his mind whether his non-belief was sufficient for him, came into our Bible class room. At the close of the exercise he came to me and asked if he might have a talk with me about the Bible lesson of the afternoon.

## Individual Work

At this I invited him to my home to pass the evening with me.

At my home he told me that he had known nothing of the Bible class before the day he came into it. But as the Bible lesson of the day was presented that afternoon in an unconventional way, he had said to himself, "There is a man who can help me. I'm going to ask him if he will." We talked freely that evening. We prayed together. That was the beginning of a close friendship of years. He soon came to confess his faith openly.

He grew steadily in knowledge and love and influence. To-day he is a prominent clergyman in the denomination with which he is connected, and is widely known for his active service, and he is leading many to enjoy the Christian faith, about the reality of which he, for a time, doubted. His coming to that Bible class that afternoon, his being impressed there, and my having the opportunity of speaking to him for Christ, were clearly of God. Well is it for

## In Church and Bible Class

us if, when God gives us such an opportunity, we do not fail to do our simple part, and thus share the blessing.

---

Two sisters came to that Bible class together. Then, one of them fell dead. The other was so much affected by her loss that she felt she could not come to the class. I attended the sister's funeral, and I expressed hearty sympathy with the survivor, but at that time I had no opportunity for a free conversation with her. Some time later I saw the stricken sister in our church on the day of a communion service, watching the service from the back part of the house. It was a snowy Sunday. I hurried round to the front door of the church, and joined her as she came out.

I walked with her, in the snow, to her home, at a distance, and talked with her, by the way, quite freely. I asked her why she did not confess Christ as her Saviour, and join with his other children in the celebration of his love, instead of sitting as a

## Individual Work

looker-on. She had not faced that question before, but now that she was asked it she considered it seriously. When I came to her home door, I stopped and asked if she would be ready to take this decisive step at the next season of communion in our church. She hesitated for a few minutes, and then she gave me her hand in assurance that she would.

On the Wednesday evening before the next communion service, when candidates for church-membership were to appear before the church session, at the close of the weekly prayer-meeting, I saw that sister present. The appointment had slipped my mind, but it had not slipped hers. She was there, ready to confess Christ, and I told her that I was glad that she was so. Seemingly her choice for life was made, as her future has evidenced.

These are merely a few illustrations, out of many, of the gain of personal work, or of individual work with individuals, for Christ, in a single sphere of my varied ex-

## In Church and Bible Class

perience. I have not been as faithful as I should have been in this. I have at times failed to act and to speak when it was my duty ; but the blessing that God has granted to my imperfect labors may stimulate others to do more and better, and thus to have far richer results to rejoice over. I pray that it may be so.

---

One who was in the congregation, but not yet in the Sunday-school, I came to know in very pleasant relations, and therefore I felt a measure of responsibility for him. He was influential in the community, and on this account I was the more desirous that his influence should be on the right side.

I sought him in his boarding-house home, and I told him frankly of my wish that he would commit himself to the Saviour, and be an open and avowed follower of his, outspoken in his service. In conversation with him, I found that he had never been accustomed to pray as a child,

## Individual Work

and therefore, naturally, not in later years. Few of us realize how much we owe, through life, to the lessons and habits and influences of our childhood, or how difficult it is for us to supply this lack in maturer years. I hardly ever realized that truth as I realized it in my talk with this man. When I urged him to kneel and pray, he responded:

"You do not know what you are asking of me. You ask me to get down on my knees and speak into the air, to talk to no one, for no realized purpose. That may seem a natural thing for you to do, but for me it would seem a most unmeaning thing, if not, indeed, a bit of mockery. I cannot do it."

This was in the early days of the telephone. I asked him:

"Have you ever talked through the telephone?"

"Oh, yes!" he said.

"You know I have one in my house, and another in my office. The telephone

## In Church and Bible Class

is a great convenience to me and a great comfort. If you had never spoken through a telephone, and should come into my house, and see me talking into a hole against the wall, while I held a peculiar tube to my ear, you might, in surprise, ask what I was doing. If I said I was in loving converse with a friend at a distance, it might seem unreasonable to you, if not a bit of mockery.

“If, after this, you should go into another house, and should see a valued friend acting similarly, and he should give you the same answer, and this should happen half a dozen times over, with friends whom you respected, would it still seem unreasonable or foolish?”

“No, it would not.”

“How is it about the spiritual telephone? Are there not as many to testify to the value of that as of the Bell telephone?”

“I suppose there are.”

“Well, now, my friend, won't you try

## Individual Work

it? You can have connection from this room. But you must be willing to try it in good faith. When you speak, you must give attention as you listen for a response. It is not enough for you to call into the mouthpiece opening without having the tube at your ear. It is a blessing to be on the spiritual telephone circuit."

This was a new way of looking at the prayer question. Soon my friend was on the telephone circuit. He had connection in his own room. He was making calls and getting responses. He would no longer consent to be without the connection. By and by he was an active member of the church, he was a teacher in the Sunday-school. There is a gain in religious instruction while one is very young, but it is well to begin to learn the best things at any age, when you first have an opportunity.



## VIII

### **Talk about Personal Work at Northfield**

For nearly forty years after my first resolve to be faithful in this line of personal, or individual, work for Christ, as God gave me opportunity and power, I do not think that it occurred to me that my methods of Christian effort, for the good of single souls, were in any way exceptional or peculiar. The circumstances of my being won to Christ, and of my beginning to work for him, made this method seem to me the natural and reasonable way; and I simply kept at it, year after year, without considering specifically whether others worked in the same way or not. But after nearly two-score years of this experience, a circumstance forced on my mind the truth that other Christians needed to be told that this was the better way for them, as well

## Individual Work

as for me, to work for Christ and for souls.

I was at Northfield one summer, attending the notable Students' Conference conducted by Mr. Moody. Several hundred students were there from twoscore or more colleges of America and Great Britain. But I was more interested in one student, whom I had gone thither to accompany, than in the hundreds of students who had been drawn thither by its general attractions and advantages. I am always more interested in the one than in the hundreds. When I am thinking of one to love and to live for, and to influence and to benefit, I can give my whole attention and all my efforts to that one. And my whole being is needed for my best work in whatever is worth doing and that I am set to accomplish.

I had had a part in the conference in several of its earlier days, and I was now about to return home, leaving the young friend, whom I had taken thither, in surroundings that I was confident he would

## At Northfield

enjoy. To Mr. Moody's urgent request that I would remain another day, and again address the students, my reply was that I was not needed. He had helpers enough. The evening before I was to leave, as I sat on the platform just back of Mr. Moody, young G. B. Studd, of Cambridge University, who was one of the famous cricketers, was making an earnest address. In speaking of his early Christian life, he mentioned that when, on one occasion, he thanked a lady who had done him a kindness, he had spoken to her direct words for Christ. In thanking him for these words, she said that never before had any one spoken such a word to her. At this, Studd said that he asked himself why none of her friends who were friends of Christ had ever been faithful to her spiritual welfare.

As Studd said this, I leaned forward and whispered to Mr. Moody:

"You have been asking me to stop over another day, and address the students. I have thought I couldn't, but Studd's talk

## Individual Work

has stirred me. Now, if you'd like it, I'll stop over to-morrow night, and talk about 'Personal Work for Souls.' Only you must promise me that my words shall not be reported in the papers, for I shall, perhaps, use real names, as illustrations, that had better not be in print."

Mr. Moody was glad to have the arrangement made, assuring me that the reporters would do as he wished, and that he would ask them not to report my remarks. That night, and the next day, I thought and prayed over the matter, in preparation for the next evening's meeting. Up to that time, I do not remember to have ever, at any time or place, spoken on this subject, or on this method of Christian work. Its importance had been in my mind simply for my own guidance. Of course, I had no notes, or memoranda, of former thoughts or experiences in this line of Christian effort. But the theme grew in prominence and importance, as I thought of it hour by hour; as, indeed, any phase of Christ's work grows,

## At Northfield

as we thoughtfully consider its magnitude and worth.

In the next evening's talk I told how I had been moved to this address by Mr. Studd's narrative of his experience in speaking for Christ to a single soul. I related how I had been, as it were, won to Christ by a word from one who had for years deferred speaking that word when he knew that he ought to speak it; and how I had, since then, made it my life purpose to speak for Christ to an individual, as being a more hopeful and important work for souls than addressing a multitude. I emphasized the fact, in addressing that large gathering of students, that I wanted to address them individually, instead of collectively; that I wished to have each one feel that I was speaking to him alone, as if no one was there except just he and myself. And, as next best to this as a fact, I wanted each student present to press home the truth of the evening to some other single student.

## Individual Work

A number of the incidents and experiences related in these pages were included in the address of that evening; but, in addition, there were<sup>d</sup> instanced several prominent Christian workers whom those students had reason to know well, who had been won to Christ, or guided in his service, by just this kind of personal Christian endeavor. Of course, such particular individuals were not to be instanced in print, then or now. But the mention of these cases, at that time, gave emphasis to the truth that this is the way to work for Christ.

The facts of the address seemed a surprise to all, perhaps more to myself than to any one else; for I had, long before, come to look at this truth, that one is more than many, as almost a matter of course,—a spiritual axiom, as it were. As the students were warmly interested in the subject of the evening, they began to manifest their interest by signs of applause, as was their wont, when it concluded. Mr.

## At Northfield

Moody, in his intense way, putting up his hand, and shaking it deprecatingly, said :

“Hush! This is no matter for applause. It’s too solemn a truth. Brother Studd, will you lead us in prayer?”

Then Mr. Studd prayed, and we all had to pray with him. The heavens seemed to open above us, and we were face to face with the Lover and Saviour of souls. I think we all realized anew what a duty and privilege it is to represent that Saviour in pleading with a soul that he loves, and that he wants us to bring to him. Even as I was, at that hour, broken down with strong feeling under the power of that inspired prayer, I felt that he who had such “power with God for men” could surely “have power with men for God.” That evening, because of its experiences and accompaniments, marked an era in my life for which I have never ceased to be grateful.

---

But there was a practical result of this considering of the subject of the evening.

## Individual Work

The leaders of the various colleges and universities represented in the Conference at once invited their fellow-students to meet in their several recognized rallying-places, and take action in the direction of personal, or individual, work for Christ in their own field of labor. So, before they separated for the night, they had pledged themselves to labor as individuals with individuals in bringing souls to Christ, in addition to all other ways in which they had worked, or would work. That certainly was a gain.

A single incident of that evening showed how ready God is to open the way for our efforts if we will be ready to enter it for his service. Mr. Studd and some of his Cambridge associates came to me, after the meeting, and asked my assistance in behalf of one of their countrymen who was with them. He was a young man standing high in his university. His father was eminent in the nation. Hence the influence of the young man would be great according as he used it for or against the



## At Northfield

right. He had, as yet, no interest in the Christian work that had drawn to Northfield some of his personal friends. He had come thither because of his intimacy with some of them, but he had little sympathy with them in their interest in what was represented by the Northfield Conference. They had sought in vain to win his interest in these things on the voyage over, and now they had come for my help.

"Give us your help, Dr. Trumbull," said Mr. Studd. "It would amply repay us for coming to America if we could only win this man to Christ."

"My dear friends," I said, "I cannot help you. I have no special power in winning souls. I have merely told you this evening of my habit of speaking a word for Christ to those whom God puts under my influence, or for whom, in some way, he gives me a responsibility. This young man is not one of that sort. I have merely met him here as one with you. All I can say is that I will have your request in mind, and if

## Individual Work

I meet him so that I have a right to speak to him I will not fail to use the opportunity."

"Well, we shall be praying for you and him, and I trust that God will open a way for a blessing."

It was then nearly midnight. I left the Auditorium and went across the campus to the hall in which I had my room. As I went up the steps of that hall I saw a young man standing in the shadow. He stepped forward to meet me. It was the young Cambridge student of whom we had been speaking, and for whom his friends and associates were now praying. As I greeted him cordially, he said :

"Dr. Trumbull, I was over in the Auditorium and I heard your address. And now I want your help. When are you going away? When can I have a talk with you?"

"I'd gladly talk to-night with you," I said, "but I am not going away until to-morrow noon."

## At Northfield

So it was arranged that I should meet him as I came out from the breakfast room early the next morning. Bidding him good-night, I went to my room to thank God and to pray to God. As I came from the breakfast room I found the "man greatly beloved" awaiting me. Together we sought a retired spot, under the trees, at some distance from the buildings. There we had a plain, free talk. He was entirely ready to take the step of submission to Christ, and of entering his service. As we kneeled together in the open air, and sought God's blessing on the decision then made and the new life course then entered on, I felt that the incident was one of God's planning and leading to, and which surely had his blessing.

I was glad to report to those who had sought my help this sequel to their request of the evening before. And when I left them all, that noon, I was confident that the new disciple would be lovingly and faithfully cared for and aided in the subsequent days

## Individual Work

at Northfield and when all returned to their English homes. Some weeks later I had a letter from that young man, speaking most gratefully of that interview under the trees on that morning in Northfield—that “heaven on earth,” as he called it, and as any place where God is can fairly be called. God is always better than we anticipate, if we are ready to work for souls in his behalf.

## IX

### **Other Talks about Personal Work**

Northfield is a unique field of influence. Its audience stands all by itself. It is not a miscellaneous gathering, but an assemblage of picked Christian workers,—of those who are excellent in spirit, who want to be profited themselves, and to help others to profit, and who ask only directions as to how they can best do this. I had often said that talking to an ordinary audience is like sowing seed broadcast, but that talking to a Northfield Students' Conference is like handing out select packages of choice seed to planters in the spring of the year. This truth was never impressed on my mind more positively than in connection with my first talk at Northfield about the duty and advantages of personal work for souls, and the aftermath of that

## Individual Work

talk, or of that evening's distribution of seed among the young planters.

I have mentioned that students of the several colleges and universities represented that year at Northfield took action that very night to secure Christian work of that sort in their loved fields of influence and action. But this, be it understood, was not the end, but the beginning, of their activities of this sort, as stimulated by what they had been told of the possibilities of such effort. At once I found myself in correspondence on the subject with those near and far, and I was asked to visit different colleges in order to help to arouse students there who were not present at Northfield when the subject was first presented. Indeed, I soon realized that the young planters whom I had met at Northfield were already doing many times as much for Christ as I had done in years, and for this I was grateful to the Lord of the harvest.

Soon after this I was invited to be pres-

## Other Talks about Personal Work

ent at the New England Students' Conference at Middletown, Connecticut. There was here, in one sense, an advantage over Northfield in that fewer were present, so that I came nearer to the one individual. Here for the first time I met Robert E. Speer, at that time of Princeton. This was a blessing to be grateful for for a lifetime. If I have not done more and better for Christ since then I alone am to blame. His personality and example ought to have been an inspiration and a help to me. I think that they have been.

At Middletown, as at Northfield, there was a precious aftermath of the sowing on the subject of personal Christian work. Individuals came to me for counsel and suggestion as to particular cases in which they were interested, and concerning which they were determined to do their duty, so that I felt that my best work was done after I had spoken, not while I was speaking. The obvious consequences for good from the presenting of the subject at both places

## Individual Work

are still open and progressing. And thus it is with God's work always. The best is yet to come.

After this I was invited to Princeton by T. H. Powers Sailer, then an undergraduate of the university. My first visit to Northfield had been to accompany him to the Students' Conference, because of my deep interest in his welfare. He was ready to lead actively in individual work for Christ in Princeton, and to stimulate his fellow-students to such action. Here, as at other places, whatever I said in favor of this line of action was sure to be followed by fresh activities in good work by men who were prepared for better work than I could do. My first visit to Princeton in this line was followed by other visits, and individual work for Christ was multiplied there as elsewhere.

Then I was invited to spend a Sunday at Yale. A. A. Stagg, the Christian athlete, prominent in the College Young Men's Christian Association work, had been with



## Other Talks about Personal Work

me at Northfield, and I found him ready to lead actively in this individual work for Christ in Yale. The fact that my son was then an under-graduate in Yale naturally intensified my interest in the work in that university. Again and again I visited Yale, and counseled with Stagg and others as to the prosecution of this work, and as to the case of particular individuals in whom the workers had become interested. And thus the work seemed to grow in importance, and the spheres of activity to multiply, month by month.

There were, from time to time, different gatherings in Philadelphia which I was invited to address on this subject, and which I was glad to attend. Thus, on several occasions, I met young volunteers for the foreign missionary cause, and talked the matter over with them, answering various practical questions that they asked in connection with what I had said as a result of my own experience. Here, as at Northfield and Princeton, young Dr. Sailer was

## Individual Work

the means of my entering an open door of influence, and he was a leader in all that was done or planned for.

An occasion of special interest to me was a conference, in Philadelphia, of Young Women's Christian Associations. This included representatives from Wellesley, Smith College, Mt. Holyoke, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, and similar institutions of Christian learning. I was invited to address these on the subject of personal Christian work. After my address I was plied with questions, perhaps more freely than on any former like occasion. By these questions I was compelled to consider phases of the possible, or desirable, work that I had not encountered in my own experience, but that I was glad to think of and talk about. The very questions themselves, in many cases, gave evidence that these young women were roused to the importance of such work, and were seeking the best way for its doing.

A few years after my first address on personal work, at Northfield, as prompted

## Other Talks about Personal Work

to it by young Studd's talk, Mr. Moody was in Europe, in the summer, and, of course, could not be present at the Students' Conference. He had arranged, however, that his place, at the head of that conference, should be taken by John R. Mott, assisted by Robert E. Speer. These workers asked me to be with them in Northfield during the conference, and to repeat my talk about personal work. This I gladly arranged to do.

Mr. Mott, in introducing me, again, to the students, spoke of the new activities, in American colleges, of personal, or individual, work for souls, as dating from the first talk on that subject from the platform where he stood. As there were many students now present who did not hear that first talk, he desired its substance to be heard by them, in order that they might be aroused to similar activity as their fellow-students were already engaged in. And thus it was that I came to give a second talk on personal work for souls at Northfield.

## Individual Work

This second talk on the subject, at Northfield, brought a fresh and unexpected gathering of spiritual aftermath, which I ought to profit by. Possibly because I had shown in my recital of experiences that I took a special interest in the troubles and needs of individuals with whom I had to do, some of the students who were present came to Mr. Mott and Mr. Speer, and asked whether I would probably be willing to hear them as to their individual spiritual doubts or needs, and to give them counsel accordingly.

To this request I gave a glad and hearty response of assured welcome to all who would seek my counsel and aid. Of course, this was in the line of the work I was talking about. One man was more than the many, however, to be reached. Mr. Mott accordingly announced, from the platform, the next day, that I would welcome, at my room in The Northfield, any student who desired my help about any phase of the Christian life. This welcome I would gladly

## Other Talks about Personal Work

give to all at any hour, either earlier or later, when the Conference was not in session.

---

Just here I want to emphasize an important truth, that not always has its right place in labors for the spiritual welfare of souls. Seeking to win an outside soul for Christ is not to be counted a superior work to that of seeking to draw a believer closer to Christ, or of upbuilding in Christ one who is already his follower. Christ is to be considered, as well as those who are, or are to be, his followers. What is best for him and his cause is worth thinking of, in the efforts of his representatives. The needs of his dear ones are also not to be lost sight of. A cup of cold water to one who is Christ's is to be recognized as a gift precious to Christ.

This truth was impressed on my mind in my army life, and it is one that every old soldier will be prompt to recognize. What counted in active service was not the number of raw recruits, but the number of

## Individual Work

disciplined soldiers. Veterans, hardened in warfare, toughened by drill and march, and steadied by experience under fire, were not to be estimated, man for man, with fresh recruits just enlisted; they were often as ten to one. An old regiment of one hundred men would sometimes be valued, by the commander, as worth more in battle than a new regiment, eight hundred strong in the ranks, which had never been tested, or its worth made known and improved. It was so in the days of ancient Israel. It is so still. Men were counted not by mere numbers, but by their solid worth. "Seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hairbreadth, and not miss;" these were a power even in comparison with "twenty and six thousand men that drew sword." Not winning more men, but improving men already in service, tells most effectively.

What is wanted in Christ's service to-day is "not more men, but more man;" and it is

## Other Talks about Personal Work

the privilege of the believer to help to raise the standard, in spirit and method, of individual believers. Those talks with individuals at Northfield, on my second visit there, were the most interesting and profitable of any talks with individuals that I ever had. Yet not one of these talks was to show a man the way to Christ. They were to meet doubts, and to surmount difficulties, and to decide as to the special way of duty. If I helped others by my words, I am glad. I know that I was helped in my efforts to help.

---

Occasionally a single church, in city or country, tries the plan of systematic visitation for the purpose of evangelism. But usually this work is deemed an exceptional method, not to be relied on as having any real value in comparison with "the stated means of grace." Yet lessons are to be learned by us all from some of these occasional experiments.

At one time I passed a Sunday in the

## Individual Work

home of a superintendent of a village Sunday-school in Connecticut. It was a humble home, back in the country, and no member of the family seemed to have had any special educational advantages. Yet not only the spiritual atmosphere of that home, but its religious exercises and methods, were such as to command my respect, and to make me wish to commend them to others. This led me to ask how all this came about, and, in consequence, I learned this instructive story.

The church of which this man was a member was an ordinary Connecticut church, not given to new things, but keeping on, year after year, in its tried and approved course. But in some way it had been led to try the experiment of having every family in the congregation, or parish, visited by appropriate members of the church for religious conversation. Possibly it was in connection with the labors of an evangelist, but of that I am not sure. My host, who was now the superintendent,



## Other Talks about Personal Work

was then not a member of the church, nor was any one of his family. He had heard of this proposed movement, and as he sat in his home one day he saw one of the deacons and another church-member drive up to the house and get out for a call. So far from having any special interest in this, he spoke jokingly of it.

But when the deacon was in the home of that man and his wife, speaking with them for Christ as he had never spoken before, they felt the power of his words, and when he knelt with them in prayer they were ready to commit themselves to the Saviour in a sense of need and trust. Their Christian life was started at that time by that individual word to them, as all the sermons and pulpit appeals for years before had not influenced or been felt by them. From that hour that was a Christian household, every child feeling its influence for good. And soon that new comer into the kingdom at middle life was chosen superintendent of the Sunday-school because he was

## Individual Work

a better man for it than any man who had been trained from childhood in the church.

So impressed was I by his methods in family worship that I adopted them in my own home, commended them to others, who were glad to adopt them, and incorporated them as models for imitation in volumes where I treated the subject. Yet they were his own method, originated by himself, he never having been instructed in these methods, or any other. With all the advantages that unmistakably come from early training in conventional and approved practices, there are certain advantages that accrue from a fresh way of looking at truth by one who has just come to apprehend the truth as the truth is in Christ. And every wise believer will be ready to admit that it is better to win one soul by an unconventional and original method than to address a thousand souls in the most eloquent and approved method without winning one soul. It is the winning of souls, not the trying an approved method, that tells.

## X

### Personal Work by Others

It must not be understood that this individual work by an individual, in behalf of souls, as described in this volume, is in any sense unique or exceptional. While it is here offered as personal testimony, it is here referred to as the kind of work that has had power in behalf of souls from the beginning, and that is likely to be most effective as long as God is God, and as souls are souls.

For example, the preachers who are known as winning most souls to Christ are not preachers who expect to win souls in a great congregation by their eloquent and fervid appeals from the pulpit, but they are those who feel that the "inquiry-meeting," or the "after-meeting" which follows their best preaching services, has chief value in its enabling them to get face to

## Individual Work

face with the needy sinner who is present in his needs. This has been so for centuries with the evangelists and revivalists of most prominence and effectiveness. Any "evangelist" who failed to give this evidence of his appreciation of the power of an individual with individuals for Christ and his cause, would be a failure in all his evangelistic labors. This conviction, indeed, is the test of the preacher's interest in individual souls, and of his determination to win them.

A stationary fog-horn has its value on a reef, or a rocky shore, as a warning to those who approach the point of danger. We must not say that this mode of sounding an alarm has no value, but we cannot suppose that a fog-horn, however clear its sound or well worked its mechanism, can fill the place of a coast guard of trained life-savers, who are on the watch to put out with their well-manned life-boat to save endangered single souls. There are different ways of working for individual souls.

## Personal Work by Others

Some of these ways are better than others, but all of them are a great deal better than none.

More than thirty years ago, I was present at a meeting of clergymen of different denominations, where a proposition was being considered of inviting a well-known "evangelist" to conduct a series of "revival meetings" in the community. Some of these clergymen criticized the methods of work and the manner of this evangelist. By and by a clergyman who was something of a sacramentarian in his views and practices, and therefore least likely to be in sympathy with revival methods, surprised all present by saying, earnestly :

"You will understand that the public methods of this man, in his work, are not such as I myself should incline to ; but I want to bear testimony to his fidelity to his Master in all his life course. I was his fellow-student in college. I knew him well there, and I can speak understandingly of his ways. In all the four years of his col-

## Individual Work

lege course, no student could be six weeks there without having to meet squarely the question of his personal relations to Christ, in consequence of the loving and earnest appeals of that follower of Christ. I knew more than one who was thus influenced by him. In my own case, I was a skeptic when I entered college, and I had little thought on the subject of religion anyway. But that man's appeals I had to meet, and I could not resist them. It is in consequence of his faithfulness that my life is given to the Christian ministry. And now, whatever I think of that man's public Christian methods, I cannot but be grateful for his personal fidelity to his Master and ours."

Those of us who heard that testimony in behalf of one who was faithful as an individual to individual souls, could not but feel that, apart from the question of the wisdom of his ordinary public methods for Christ, his spirit of faithfulness commanded our respect and approval. The true seeker after souls is too earnest in his work to be

## Personal Work by Others

willing to divide his energies among more than one. That soul he loves, and that soul he must have.

And it seemed to me, as I listened to this testimony as to that man's faithfulness to individuals for Christ, and as I thought over the matter afterwards, that his life choice of the work of an evangelist, or revivalist, may have pivoted on his success as an individual worker for individuals. As he had found that addressing a multitude did not win a multitude, but that appealing to an individual did often win the individual, may he not have chosen that kind of ministerial work which gave most prominence to work with individuals for Christ? As a worker for individuals, he had prominence in Christ's service, in widely different fields, for a whole generation.

Another example of persistence in work for individual souls, which impressed me profoundly, was in another than the college sphere, although in the same earnest spirit. Soon after the Civil War, while enlistments

## Individual Work

for the regular army were still going on in different parts of the country, in order to bring up that army to its specified numbers on the peace basis, young officers, with a good record of service and of known efficiency, were assigned to this duty, and some of these officers did good work for Christ as well as for country.

One such young officer was in turn assigned to several New England cities, and made his mark for his Master in all of these fields of action and influence. Having the true idea of work for many as best done through work for one, he pressed that idea in all that he did, or that he urged others to do. His profession as a soldier led him to feel that the best way of winning recruits is by enlisting one man at a time, rather than by trying to win a roomful by a patriotic speech.

In each city to which he was assigned he naturally went to the Young Men's Christian Association as a hopeful center and starting-point. There he usually



## Personal Work by Others

found the weekly prayer-meeting as perhaps the highest point of spiritual devotion. But this was, to his mind, too much after the pattern of an ordinary church service, where the congregation was largely of church-members and church-goers, while he wanted to reach those who were still outside, but who were compelled to come in, against their ordinary preferences and inclinations. Hence to this work he vigorously set himself at once.

Going into such a prayer-meeting, early in the evening, at one time, he asked the leaders how many persons had been sought out from the highways and byways that evening. On being told that nothing of the sort had been done, he asked that all should kneel at once in prayer, offering an ejaculation of consecration to this service, and of petition for help in this service, and then all should scatter to the street corners and drinking-places and gambling-houses, seeking souls, and urging them to come in where they could be helped. Fifteen min-

## Individual Work

utes or more later they were to return to the Association rooms, and then they might have a hopeful prayer-meeting there. The first experiment was an eminent success, and its every repetition seemed an improvement on this. More of those for whom they had there hoped and prayed were gathered in in a single evening, under this plan of work, than under the old plan, or the no plan, in any one year before.

Of course, the good results of this kind of effort were a surprise to those who had supposed that being willing to pay for a seat in church, or being willing to look up for themselves a regular religious service, was an essential preliminary to being a hopeful member of a regular congregation. This has been so, in fact, for centuries. In this case gamblers gave up gambling, drunkards gave up drinking, scoffers gave up scoffing, doubters gave up doubting, and those who had been counted as outcasts became glad and grateful followers of the Lord Jesus, urging their old associates to receive life in-

## Personal Work by Others

stead of death, as they had already accepted it. In one instance a rumseller, influenced by his now rescued customers, abandoned his vile pursuit and became an active recruiting officer for the Captain of his Salvation. Such results as this are natural when souls are sought one at a time by one who is in loving, living earnestness, intent in pursuit of that one soul.

Such a teacher as this, in such a work as this, was a power for good over those whom he inspired and led in it. He did not propose to do all the work which he pointed out. He simply convinced them that this was the way for its doing, and then he left them to do it. Those who had never before thought of this method of work took hold of it gladly and effectively under his direction. One of my army comrades whom I had been privileged to lead to Christ while in the army, told me of his experience in this man-to-man soul-hunting. He had kneeled in prayer in the Young Men's Christian Association rooms, and now

## Individual Work

he was seeking souls. As he stood opposite a saloon he saw a young man, whom he had never seen before, apparently about going in. He stood at the turning of the ways. The story my friend told me was :

"I tapped him on the shoulder. As he turned inquiringly to me, I said, 'Come, go with me, and I'll do you good.'"

"Where do you want me to go?" he asked.

"It's a prayer-meeting of young men. I've got good there, and I want you to get the same."

"A prayer-meeting! I'm not dressed for prayer-meeting."

"You're dressed enough. The Lord looketh not on the outward appearance. The Lord looketh on the heart."

And then the recruiting officer for Christ drew his arm through the other's arm, and led him in the right way. In the Association rooms that new recruit rose, and told of his wish to serve Christ, and he asked to be prayed for by those present. And that

## Personal Work by Others

was the beginning of a new life for him. And this was only one instance among many.

Of the work of this worker for Christ and for single souls I knew much in varied and widely different fields. In addition to all that he did for souls, he did yet more in leading others to work in this way for Christ. Several of these were, at the time of his meeting them, young men who were in preparation for the Christian ministry. They learned from him the great truth that it is better to work for one than for many. After that, not even a theological seminary could mislead them into the idea that it is better to appeal to a great congregation of those whom you cannot get at, than to address a single soul face to face and make a direct issue with him.

These two instances of the student evangelist and of the army recruiting officer have been of themselves satisfactory proof that the ordinary and conventional working for souls in the mass is not the best way, and that the best way is a better way.

## Individual Work

And my own experience of half a century has tended to the same conclusion, in spite of my many shortcomings and failures.

The real question is not, "Is this the best time for a personal word for Christ?" but it is "Am I willing to improve this time for Christ, and for a precious soul, whether it is the best time or not?" If the Christian waits until the sinner gives sign of a desire for help, or until the Christian thinks that a loving word to the sinner will be most timely, he is not likely to begin at all. The only safe rule for his guidance—if indeed a Christian needs a specific rule as a guide—is to speak lovingly of Christ and of Christ's love for the individual whenever one has an opportunity of choosing his subject of conversation in an interview with an individual who may be in special need, yet who has given no special indication of it. This seems to have been Paul's idea in his counsel to young Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; bring to the

## Personal Work by Others

proof, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." The most important of all themes of converse would seem to be worthy of prominence in comparison with others. But does it ordinarily have this among Christians?

When, on one occasion, I had spoken on this subject at a Students' Conference in Northfield, a well-known Christian business man gave me an incident out of his own experience that well illustrates the truth I would here emphasize. He was on his way to an international convention of Young Men's Christian Associations in Montreal. As the train approached that city, a bright young man came into the car as a representative of a prominent hotel in Montreal, seeking guests for his hostelry. My friend inquired as to the location and advantages of the house, in view of the heat of summer, then prevailing. At once the young man waxed eloquent over the subject, and fairly convinced his hearer that this was the place for him.

## Individual Work

As my informant arranged for a room there, he asked pleasantly of the zealous advocate :

“My young friend, are you a follower of Jesus?”

“I can't say I am, sir,” was the reply.

“Well, if you were in Christ's service, and would plead as earnestly for his cause as you do for the hotel you now represent, you would be a valuable helper to your Master, and you might do a great deal of good to others. I wish you were in Christ's service, using your powers for him.”

The young man passed on through the car, and my friend went his way to the city, having simply said this word for his Master, as was his wont. It did not seem to be an exceptionally hopeful occasion, but who can tell?

Several years passed. My friend sat, one day, in his private office in a New England city. As he called out a question to some one in the hallway, his pleasant voice sounded through the building. Almost



## Personal Work by Others

immediately a strange young man appeared at the office door, and said:

"Excuse me, sir; but, may I ask, did you not attend a convention in Montreal, about the first of July, a few summers ago?"

"Yes, I did, as I well remember; but what of that?"

"Do you remember speaking to a young man on the cars, and telling him you wished he would work for Jesus as faithfully as he was then working for a hotel in Montreal?"

"I think I do, now that you recall it."

"Well, *I* cannot forget it. Your words rang in my ears. They resulted in bringing me into the service of Jesus, and now I am trying to speak words for him wherever I go. Being in this city on business to-day, I came into this building [where were the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association], and as I was near your door I heard that voice which has been sounding in my memory all these

## Individual Work

years, and I have come to thank you for what you have done for me."

That delegate to the International Convention of Young Men's Christian Associations did more by his word to an individual for Christ than if he had made half a dozen eloquent addresses in the convention. That is a fact to be borne in mind by all. Is it not worth while to be remembered pleasantly, as speaking lovingly for Jesus to those whom we meet in our daily life? Why should any of us fail of saying the words, day by day, that may be thus remembered as having honored our Master, and as having helped those whom Christ loves?

## XI

### **Why is Personal Work so Neglected?**

If words for Christ to an individual are most effective in the winning of souls, why are they not more commonly spoken by those who love Christ and love souls? Is it because persons do not know this truth, or that they are incompetent to speak the needed words; or do they simply neglect the duty which they recognize as a duty, and which they are amply competent to perform? Probably no one answer would meet every case. Different answers would be given in different cases.

We do know that evil opposes good in the universe. Over against Ormuzd is Ahriman in the Zoroastrian religion. Over against God is Satan in the Bible teachings. It would seem that Satan desires to prevent any believer from speaking

## Individual Work

a word to an individual for Christ even while he does not expect to prevent all preaching to a whole congregation. His favorite argument with a believer is that just now is not a good time to speak on the subject. The lover of Christ and of souls is told that he will harm the cause he loves by introducing the theme of themes just now. Will not every disciple who has had experience in this line of effort admit that he has frequently found this to be the case?

Out of my own experience I can bear testimony to this. From nearly half a century of such practice, as I have had opportunity day by day, I can say that I have spoken with thousands upon thousands on the subject of their spiritual welfare. Yet, so far from my becoming accustomed to this matter, so that I can take hold of it as a matter of course, I find it as difficult to speak about it at the end of these years as at the beginning. Never to the present day can I speak to a single soul for Christ

## Why is Personal Work so Neglected

without being reminded by Satan that I am in danger of harming the cause by introducing it just now. If there is one thing that Satan is sensitive about, it is the danger of a Christian's harming the cause he loves by speaking of Christ to a needy soul. He has more than once, or twice, or thrice, kept me from speaking on the subject by his sensitive pious caution, and he has tried a thousand times to do so. Therefore my experience leads me to suppose that he is urging other persons to try any method for souls except the best one.

This I do know, that men who have a national and an international fame as preachers to a multitude actually say—not only think, but say—that they cannot speak to an individual soul for Christ. In some instances these preachers speak of it as if they counted a sinner's personality too sacred to speak a word to, even to save his soul or to honor Christ. In other cases, they speak of their inability as an amiable weakness, instead of as a pitiable moral

## Individual Work

and spiritual defect, which proves them incompetent for their position and profession. Yet these claims or confessions have to be recognized in the attempt to answer the startling question, in view of all that is known of what has been, and of what might be, "why is personal work so generally neglected?"

Another reason why personal as over against collective work for souls is not so prominent or so attractive a line of religious effort on behalf of Christ or of those whom he loves, is that this seems insignificant in contrast with the other. Apart from any evidence or argument on the subject, is it to be supposed that a few personal words to an individual in a corner of a seat, or as one walks with another to or from a church service, is as likely to be impressive or convincing while only the one preacher and the one hearer know what is said, as are the words of an eloquent orator which echo and re-echo in a vast auditorium filled with a sympathetic audience? Is not the stating

## Why is Personal Work so Neglected

of that question its own prompt answering? Whether on account of God or of Satan, the crowd has an obvious advantage in attractiveness over the individual as an audience for a Christian who is in search of souls.

Even if we are told not to despise "the day of small things" in comparison with the day of great things, we are inclined to prefer the latter for our own reputation, and to hope that it may have a gain in effectiveness. This is so in other warfare than that of Christ with his foes. My experience in active service in the Civil War taught me, as I am sure it taught others on both sides in that conflict, that the thunder of artillery was likely to be most impressive, but that the rifles of the sharpshooters brought down more men. This was peculiarly the case in the siege life before Charleston and before Petersburg. The shriek and the crash of the bursting shell told in their impressiveness, especially upon those who were least experienced; but the quiet "hum" or the "whiz" of the rifle of the

## Individual Work

sharpshooter did execution as ten to one, or as a hundred to one, in comparison. Yet the artillery officer who could tell of how many rounds he had fired in action could boast more of his service, even if he did not know that he had ever hit anybody, than could the best sharpshooter on the whole line. So it is with those who address individuals for Christ. Sharpshooters may bring down more individuals with their telling single bullets, but they cannot make the impression in the surrounding atmosphere that is made by the big guns that are heard to thunder out from the pulpit casements every time they open fire.

---

One more reason why pulpit casements and their thundering artillery have an advantage over sharpshooters with their bullets aimed at single individuals, is in the training that the men in the casements have had in preparation for active service. In most of the theological seminaries and divinity schools little special instruction is given in



## Why is Personal Work so Neglected

individual work for individual souls, and, in consequence, young ministers go out from those training schools without knowing how to do the most important work of the ministry. In some of these training schools there is no professor competent to give instruction on the subject, even if it were desired as the most important thing to be sought after. Of course, an old minister, who never did anything in that line while he was a preacher, could not hope to teach a learner about it, when he himself was approaching the "dead-line." The magnitude of this difficulty can hardly be over-estimated as an obstacle to effective work for single souls among ministers and in the church.

So intent is the average young minister or divinity student on his great work of preparation for preaching the gospel to all the world, or at least to a great congregation, that he should hardly be expected to turn aside for the insignificant mission of speaking to an individual for Christ. A

## Individual Work

single incident related to me by an active worker for individuals for Christ illustrates this truth startlingly. He was visiting a well-known divinity school in order to have an interview with a student. While waiting for that student he was improving his time, as usual, by seeking individual souls near him. Encountering a janitor, or other helper, in the hall, he had a pleasant, direct talk with him. He found a soul waiting to be helped. He led that soul to the Saviour. In conversation he found that although that soul had been long in the vicinity of embryo preachers, not a word had been spoken to him by one of them. They were waiting to be eloquent to a full congregation. Why should they waste their strength on a single soul? That is an illustrative incident, even if it is not an instructive one.

Pulpit preaching has had undue prominence among Protestants in comparison with other agencies for winning souls, since the days of the Reformation. And modern pul-

## Why is Personal Work so Neglected

pit preaching is more prominent as a monologue than that of the earlier Christian centuries. In the days of Chrysostom and of Augustine the preacher was readier to converse from the pulpit with the individual than is the modern preacher. In other words, modern preaching has neither the approval of high antiquity nor of practical reasonableness. More persons can be won singly than collectively. That was recognized in the ancient times. It would be recognized nowadays by all who would examine into the subject, and who were ready to be convinced by good sense, sound judgment, and experience.

After all, it is the man-to-man work that tells. And because it is this work that is most effective, this is the work that it is best to do. Even though it is a less attractive work, as we look at it, and seems to others less important to be done, we must admit that the results are worth considering. As John B. Gough said of the one loving word of Joel Stratton that won him : " My friend,

## Individual Work

it may be a small matter for you to speak the one word for Christ that wins a needy soul—a *small matter to you*, but it is *everything to him*." It is forgetting this truth that causes personal work to be neglected.

## XII

### Influence, on Others, of Personal Conviction

A man's belief of what he proclaims goes far to make it believed by others. So long as he himself has any doubt on the subject, he is not likely to convince those who are in doubt. This is true in every sphere of life. If a man sees his neighbor's house on fire, in the dead of night, his wild, ringing shriek of "Fire! Fire! Fire! Turn out! Turn out! Your house is afire!" sounds out on the midnight air with a force that is itself convincing. All who hear it know that the one who utters it feels its truth, and wants others to feel it.

How different it would be if a man should knock timidly at the house door, and say gently that he had reason to think that a fire was kindling in the vicinity, and that he thought it would be well to look

## Individual Work

into the matter. How could he expect dull sleepers to be aroused on such a call? If his knowledge did not stir him more than this, how could he expect those yet asleep to be aroused from their torpor by him?

Peculiarly is this the case with one who sounds a call to stir a sluggish soul to action, in view of truth that he deems precious and all-important, but which the other is not very anxious about or fully convinced of. Any show of doubt, or indecision, on the part of God's herald, is calculated to shake the confidence of the hearer of the message. This has been found to be the case by every gospel preacher, or winner of single souls, in any sphere. Every show of earnestness, or evidence of intense conviction, on the part of those who stand for Christ, gives added weight to each word of the message from the Captain of our Salvation. Hearty Governor Andrew, of Massachusetts, said of Abraham Lincoln, when he had assumed the presidency, "I'm

## Influence, on Others, of Personal Conviction

glad we've got a man who believes something." If a man would have another believe something, he must believe something himself.

An earnest young clergyman in New England, whom I know well, began his ministry in a parish where his predecessor had lacked strong conviction, and had encouraged, if not cultivated, doubts. The new clergyman's beliefs were startling to his congregation. One Sunday, after the service, a bright young man came up to the minister, and said:

"I don't believe what you are preaching, and I want to discuss your beliefs with you."

"Well, my friend, there's no use in our doing that. I am convinced, and you don't want to be. I am set here to preach the truth that I believe, whether my hearers believe it or not."

Weeks went on. The minister saw his young friend, Sunday after Sunday, in the gallery. One Sunday the minister invited

## Individual Work

all who wanted to converse with him on the matter of personal religion to come to his study on Monday evening. That evening this young man appeared. Coming up to the pastor's study table, where the pastor sat, he said:

"I am here to-night, not for argument, but for counsel. I've watched you and have heard you for weeks. I know that you have got something that I haven't. Now I want you to tell me how I can get your crucified Christ."

The preacher was ready to help that seeker. And another soul was won to Christ through the counsel of a believer who had convictions.

---

It is the same with a Christian preacher as it is with a Christian layman in work for Christ. The truth in each case is the same, and the power of a conviction is felt alike by the hearer, whoever is the declarer of the truth. One who was widely known as faithful in good words and good works in



## **Influence, on Others, of Personal Conviction**

Eastern Massachusetts told me of his experience in this line. He was accustomed to ride out from Boston daily to and from a suburban town. One who was frequently his seat-mate was a man prominent as an unbeliever, and who edited a free-thinking periodical. Again and again this man endeavored to draw my friend into discussion on the subject of religion, but without succeeding in so doing. One day my friend openly met the matter in this way:

“I do not want to have a discussion with you on the subject of religion. I’m no match for you in argument. You’d get the better of me every time. But, apart from that, one thing I know, that the Lord Jesus Christ is my Saviour, and I trust him all the time. This is the comfort of my life, and I wish you had the same comfort.”

At this his pertinacious seat-mate brought his hand down sharply on my friend’s knee, and said heartily:

“There you’ve got me, my friend. I’ve nothing to offer against that.”

## Individual Work

My friend's conviction was his best and his resistless argument. "I know whom I have believed" will convince another if anything will. No method of discussion will take its place with any hearer.

---

An experience of my own in the modern Athens emphasized this truth. I was in an office where I occasionally had business, and, as I was talking with the proprietor, I said, as he asked my opinion in a matter of principle:

"The Bible says so and so."

"*What* Bible?" he inquired sharply, almost defiantly.

"The Bible," I replied to this question, quietly but firmly.

"Muhammadans have one Bible. Boodhists have another Bible. Jews have another Bible. Chinese have another Bible. Which Bible do you mean?" he responded.

"*The* Bible," was my response.

"Well, I suppose I know what you mean."

## Influence, on Others, of Personal Conviction

That was a point gained to start with. He admitted that "*The Bible*" was not to be put on a plane with the others, so that he was really in no doubt on the subject.

"But," he added, "I don't agree with you as to the value of the Bible."

"I'm sorry," I replied.

"You think, I suppose," he went on to say, "that the Bible is God's word."

"Of course I do."

"Well, won't you try to prove to me that it is so?"

"No, indeed."

"Wouldn't you like to have me believe the Bible?"

"Of course I should."

"Well, then, why not try to convince me?"

"If God has failed in this, with all that he has done for you in a third of a century, I don't propose to set my little hazelnut brain at the task at this late day."

"Why, then, won't you prove to me that God is what you believe him to be?"

## Individual Work

"The subject is too sacred for ordinary discussion. I wouldn't consent to discuss with you the question whether my mother was really my mother; yet God is dearer to me than is my mother or my father."

At this I left the office without further comment. A few weeks later I was there again. He said:

"I understand, Mr. Trumbull, how you feel about the Bible; so I won't ask you to discuss it. But have you any objection to telling me what you understand the Bible to teach on certain points?"

"Not in the slightest," I replied.

Then the way was open for a frank, free, and reverent conference over the teachings of the Bible; and the man who had been a scoffer was ready to be told the truth as to Bible teachings by one who had no doubts on the subject, and who therefore commanded confidence. Several such conferences as this seemed to bring this man into a different attitude toward the Bible and its teachings. After a longer absence

## **Influence, on Others, of Personal Conviction**

than usual from Boston, when I was once more in the office of this man, he said to me :

“Mr. Trumbull, will you tell me just where is your home?”

As I told him, he said :

“I’ve been very sick. I thought I was going to die, and I wanted to send for you.”

Then, as if to show that he had not wholly abandoned his disbelief, he added :

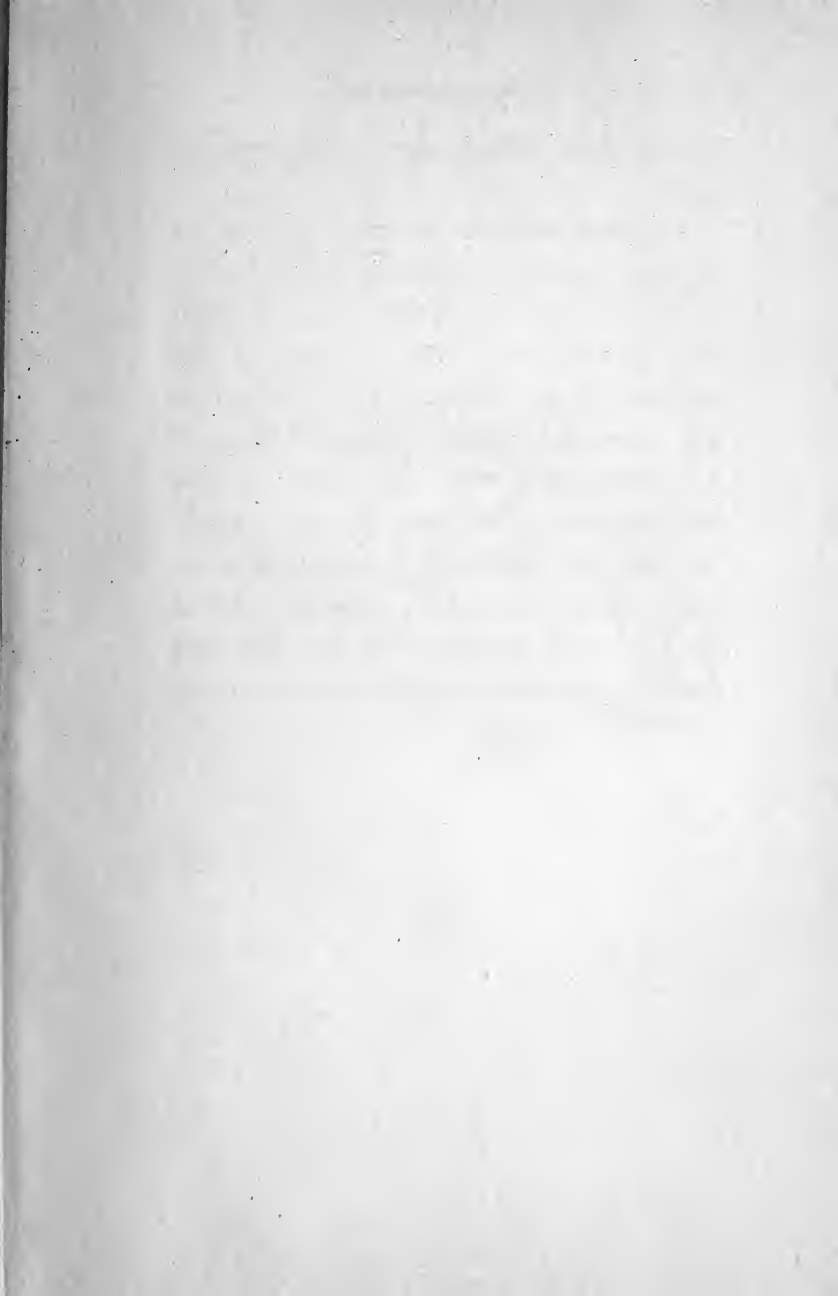
“Not that I was really troubled about myself or my beliefs, but you seem so confident in your beliefs, that, if I was going to die, I wanted you to talk with me.”

The way was then open for a free talk about Christ and his salvation, which I tried to improve for that needy soul. “For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.” We surely ought to be confident in our beliefs, and impress others by this confidence, as we seek to win them to their Saviour and ours. We have every advantage, and we

## Individual Work

should show this in our loving labor for souls.

Intense conviction, showing itself in intense personality, marks the difference between an ordinary leader, or counselor, and an exceptional one. It was not the number of his soldiers, but his power to use every man as if he were ten men, or a hundred, that made Napoleon, or Phil Sheridan, the general that he was. Surely he who has Christ back of him in his every word and his every deed, ought to feel that he is wielding the power of the Almighty when he acts or speaks for his Saviour in that Saviour's work.







Sept 27 1901

SEP 12 1901



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 539 812 0